

Lassen County Child Protective Services

LASSEN COUNTY
CHILDREN AND FAMILY PROTECTIVE SERVICE

Response Requested: Board of Supervisors

Lassen County 2003-2004 Grand Jury received numerous comments, complaints and accusations in regard to Children and Family Protective Service, commonly referred to as CPS. Some of the complaints received by this Grand Jury were spurred by allegations of misconduct by Social Workers who no longer work in Lassen County CPS and some alleged misconduct might have occurred prior to July 1, 2003.

Complaints and Accusations:

1. Social Workers were reporting more hours on time sheets than they were actually working.
2. Controlled Documents were being shredded by CPS workers. Such documents have a statement printed on the back warning that it is a felony to destroy them.
3. Out of county visits to foster homes were being reported as completed, while logs at the foster homes were showing the visits were not completed.
4. Out of county travel was made by a CPS worker to a location where Lassen County does not have child placements or foster homes.
5. A Social Worker, while working for CPS, was alleged to have been involved in narcotics trafficking.
6. A Social Worker had allegedly placed a child in a foster home contrary to rules and regulations, and the child was sexually molested

in the foster home.

7. Two children were placed in the home of a CPS Social Worker's relative, without approval of the home as a foster care home. The complaint included the accusation that the relative is a convicted felon.

8. Two reports accuse the same social worker, whom is no longer with CPS, of failing to promptly report child abuse occurring in a foster home, as required by Calif. Penal Code Section 11166.

9. It was alleged that a Social Worker failed to complete the necessary procedures to provide medical assistance to a child placed out of county in a foster facility for approximately six months. Without the required medication, the child became suicidal and self-mutilating.

10. A past Director of CPS was accused of attempting to obtain confidential personnel information from CPS, while employed outside of CPS.

11. A child in an "out of county foster home" had his medical cards and financial assistance to the foster home, "cut off" by someone using a closed system computer in Lassen County Social Service or CPS office. This was alleged to be retaliation against the child's guardian, who had previously filed a civil suit against CPS.

GENERAL FINDINGS:

Lassen County 2003/2004 Grand Jury had hoped that personnel changes, including a new director, a new work environment, and a new location, would keep CPS off the Lassen County Grand Jury's full plate. That hope failed in short order.

As of May 2004, the Grand Jury found that all of the CPS workers that were responsible for the complaints received during this investigative year were no longer working at CPS. Three were terminated, one voluntarily quit, and two were transferred to other Lassen County employment. The Grand Jury visited the new facility being utilized by CPS in January and found it to be a great improvement over the old facility at Roosevelt School, on Richmond Road. We were impressed with the attitude and friendliness of the workers. It appeared that it was a good work environment and the workers were getting along. Lassen County hired an interim Director of Health and Human Services and a new Director of Child Protective Service. The new interim Director of H&HS met with the Grand Jury and outlined his plan to bring some semblance of proficiency and order to an embattled CPS. A new director of CPS was on board, and all appeared to be improving with the hard work of both directors, CPS and H&HS. The Grand Jury CPS Committee met with CPS officials on a regular basis, to follow the progress of the department and to address some complaints received by the Grand Jury. New Social Workers were hired, and CPS appeared to be fully staffed. However, with the political atmosphere and serious problems beginning to surface, there has been an excessive turnover of Social Workers. Social worker turnover has reached 100% for this investigative year. With new Social Workers, the new Director of CPS had to take on a large caseload, as well as the responsibility of running the department. Vacant positions added to the workload. The Program Manager position has been vacant for nearly two years. The first-line supervisor position has been vacant for approximately

eleven months. The Grand Jury feels that this slowed the progress of training new Social Workers and improving service, but understands the need to address the caseload in an expedient manner. Children in bad situations cannot wait for new workers to be trained. From all reports received from the interim Director of Health and Human Services, Lassen County CPS was making progress towards compliance with the State and Federal Mandates.

Public Law 96-272, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, sets Federal Standards that states must meet to receive Federal Funding. The State Social Services Department administers a Federal Mandated Plan to monitor and evaluate Child Welfare Services statewide. The State reviews seven areas of CPS responsibility, within the following categories: Emergency Response; Family Maintenance; Family Reunification; Permanent Placement; and Independent Living Program. The State surveyed Lassen County in May 2004. That survey, as provided by H&HS Director to the Grand Jury, found that Lassen County CPS, under the current Director, is out of compliance in all seven critical areas. (Attachment D, May 2004 Draft Survey)

This is a downturn from the last state survey conducted in July of 2002 (Attachment A, Oversight Report of Child Welfare Services in Lassen County). The State considers above 90% in the review areas to be in compliance, and less than that to need corrective action. The seven critical review questions and their results from 2002 are:

Emergency Response Contacts

1. Did the social worker initiate an in-person investigation

within the required time frame? 2002 - 46% of cases,

2. Was face-to-face contact made with the child within the latest regulatory time frame? 2002 - 40% of cases

Health and Education

1. Were there documentation indicating that the out-of-home care provider was given the child's health and education information?

2002 - over 90% of cases

Medical and Dental

1. Did the child receive the most current preventive physical health examination in accordance with the CHDP periodicity schedule? 2002 - 79% of cases.

2. Is there evidence of an annual dental examination? 2002 - 80% of cases.

Independent Living Program Plan

1. Did the case plan incorporate the transitional independent living plan? 2002 - 40% of cases.

The state review of Lassen County CPS in May of 2004 clearly indicates CPS was not functioning well under its new director. The first indicator of poor performance is Emergence Response. The May 2004 survey found that Lassen County CPS responded, within the mandated time frame, in 2 out of 54 cases, 4% compliance in the cases reviewed, down from a 46% in 2002.

In 2002, a new law, SB 636 was passed and went into effect. It requires a reorganization of Child Welfare Systems statewide. The law requires a completed plan to be implement by June 30, 2004 and implication of the plan in September 2004. Lassen County CAO,

H&HS Director and the CPS Director all said the Plan was moving forward. The Grand Jury found that nothing was accomplished towards this goal until the first of June 2004, when Behavioral and Public Health Director (H&HS) discovered the lack of progress being made on SB 636. He took bold action, called in assistance from outside the Department, and, as of June 25, the plan is completed and they are preparing to implement within the mandated time frame (Attachment E).

Lassen County hired a short term Director for Health and Human Services to reorganize that department and all of the departments under the umbrella of H&HS (The department is now called: Behavioral and Public Health), which included CPS. Child Welfare Services (CPS) was reorganized into a stand alone department. The Director's investigation of the situation at CPS uncovered several major problems. Some of which had been discovered by the Grand Jury. His findings and recommendations are outlined in his, "Final Report on the Restructure of Lassen County Health and Human Services," (Attachment B). His changes and removal of several social workers improved CPS. The H&HS Director's investigation brought to light wrong doing by some social workers. Some of his discoveries are criminal in nature and need further investigation.

April 2004, information was received disclosing CPS was in crisis, and the CPS director was being told she would be fired. The Grand Jury found evidence that a campaign to discredit the new CPS director had been ongoing for some time by past and present CPS Social Workers. The campaign included many rumors and

statements that, on their face, could not be accurate. This smear campaign eventually got the attention of the Lassen County CAO, who told the director she was being fired. In response, all the current CPS workers, except one, went to the County CAO office and attempted to confront him. He was not available to meet with the employees, and, apparently, the threat to fire the CPS director fell to the wayside. Shortly thereafter, the Director of CPS went off work on administrative leave. Again CPS was left without direct supervision and oversight.

June 1, 2004, the CPS Director went out on extended medical leave. Without a Program Manager or First Line Supervisor and staffing at 50%, and with inexperienced social workers, the Department was in crisis. Lassen County CAO had to take emergency action and reorganize the department, appointing a new Director of Behavioral and Public Health. The new Director appointed a new Deputy Director for CPS and took decisive action. They found a large number of referrals, approximately 110 at the CPS Office that had not been acted upon. He also suspected many phone calls had not been returned, due to a phone system problem. Within 24 hours the Director had assembled social workers from several areas of Lassen County and had started the clean up process.

The Director brought in a company specializing in social work, Community Service Solutions, to evaluate CPS and starts the process of implementing SB 636. (Attachment E, California's Child and Family Services Review, County Self-Assessment) They had no choice, with only 30 days to complete a mandated program that had been the law for two years. Next, he brought in Gary Kupfer, an

expert in Child Welfare Service, with experience in the California system. By June 21, Gary Kupfer had made a very thorough review of the problems in Lassen County CPS and provided a report and recommendations. His report was found to be very complete (Attachment F). In 25 days the Director has assembled help to catch up the cases in CPS, and obtained a complete review of the department and implemented SB636. This is more progress than has occurred over the past several years. The new Director and the new Deputy Director also have established a plan to bring Lassen County CPS up to date.

The past misconduct by CPS may cost Lassen County in the future. One family is currently suing Lassen County and CPS in Federal Court for alleged wrongdoing. Information was also received that other suits have been filed against Lassen County CPS for past wrongdoing. The end result of this type of action is that the children under the care of CPS may suffer and the residents of Lassen County may eventually have to pay for the wrongdoing by CPS. Even if no wrongdoing is found, the defense of Lassen County will still place an extra burden on the taxpayers.

Complaints and Accusations:

1. The interim Director of H&HS reviewed time sheets, computer time, and other documents relating to three CPS social workers. Based on his investigation the three social workers were relieved of their duties with Lassen County. The Grand Jury was told that this information and evidence was discussed with Lassen County District

Attorney and Lassen County Counsel. According to testimony the evidence of wrongdoing was given to Lassen County Counsel. Lassen County DA's Office said they did not receive the evidence from the County Counsel's office. No follow-up investigation was conducted on this allegation. All of the relieved social workers have filed action against Lassen County and one has received a settlement from Lassen County.

2. The interim Director discovered circumstantial evidence that CPS's copies of the referral forms (controlled documents) were missing from CPS files. However, the mandated reporters copies and computer files were recovered. (When a mandated reporter reports wrongdoing with a child, they receive a copy of the report, it is entered into a controlled computer system, and a copy is maintained in CPS.) A local resident obtained this information and they told the Grand Jury they had taken the information to Lassen County District Attorney, Susanville Police Department and Lassen County Sheriff's Office and requested they investigate this allegation. None would respond or start an investigation on this complaint.

3. CPS reported that out of county visits to foster homes were being reported on time sheets and travel expenses, but the foster home logs showed the social workers did not go to the homes.

4. Travel claims and expenses were claimed and paid to a social worker for a visit to a distant city, where Lassen County does not have child placements, nor does it consider that city for placements.

5. A social worker was reported to be involved in narcotics trafficking in the Susanville area. This information seemed to be common knowledge to those agencies that enforce these regulations. This

social worker no longer works for Lassen County and no complaints for violations of these laws have been issued.

6. A Lassen County Social worker temporarily assigned to assist CPS was accused of placing a child in a foster home contrary to CPS and State Rules for child placement.

The social worker was reprimanded by the CPS Director for this action. It was reported that before other arrangements could be made for the child, the child was sexually molested in the foster home. This was not a new foster home and there is great concern about other children that have been placed there in the past.

7. A social worker that is no longer employed at Lassen County CPS allegedly placed two children in a relative's home that was not approved as a foster care home.

CPS was having difficulty locating the children and getting them out of the home. The accusation included the allegation that the relative is a convicted felon. However, the Grand Jury could not access criminal records, but the allegation seemed to be common knowledge of local law enforcement. The CPS Director confirmed that this did occur and they were working overtime to get the situation resolved.

8. A temporary CPS social worker is alleged to have discovered child abuse on two separate occasions and, as a mandated reporter, failed to report the discovery for some period of time. One incident is alleged to have been over one week. Penal

Code section 11166 establishes the time line for mandated reporters and social workers to report suspected, or discovered child abuse.

This section requires social workers to report immediately, or as soon as practical by phone, and they must produce a written report within

36 hours.

9. Lassen County CPS placed a child in a foster facility in Southern California. The placing county is responsible for providing authority to supply and dispense needed medication to the child. The social worker assigned to the case is responsible for the orders to supply the medication and to keep track of the child, including contact with the child. A Lassen County CPS social worker, in spite of repeated calls and faxes from the care facility, failed to do the work required to provide the authority and medication to the child. Eventually emergency action had to be taken by the care facility, and the child was placed under a suicide watch after self-mutilation occurred. Other personnel in CPS took over the case and obtained the necessary care for the child.

10. Lassen County Grand Jury took testimony that an attempt was made by a past director of CPS to obtain personnel information from the CPS Office with an outside computer. This information is confidential, and persons working in Lassen Works under the H&HS umbrella are not entitled to obtain personnel information from CPS.

11. A complaint was received that a child in an out of county foster care facility had medical and financial support interrupted by someone accessing a closed computer system located in Lassen Works. The computer in Lassen Works can access the same program as the CPS computers. The medical card that is used to access medical aid and payments for support to the facility was terminated. The CPS director confirmed the occurrence and advised they were in the process, with the assistance of California Department of Social Service that maintains the system, to identify

the person who accessed the system.

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CPS:

The 2003-2004 Lassen County Grand Jury makes the following recommendations in regard to Lassen County Child Protective Service:

1. With the majority of complaints raised about Lassen County CPS being criminal in nature, or violations of State Rules and regulations, and with the inability of Lassen County to investigate itself, the Grand Jury recommends that the State of California Attorney General, State of California Department of Social Service, or the Federal Bureau of Investigation investigate the allegations. A Federal Grand Jury should also be convened to investigate all the allegations of wrongdoing. Federal money is involved giving the Federal System jurisdiction in this issue.
2. The Grand Jury recommends that the new Director and new Deputy Director be given support and the resources necessary to implement the clean up and correction of CPS. They now have the knowledge of what is wrong and how to fix it. The Grand Jury feels this is the best and last chance Lassen County has to "fix the problem." However, Lassen County Administration and the Grand Jury need to keep track of the status of CPS. If substantial progress is not made within six months the Grand Jury Recommends the State of California Department of Social Services take over Lassen County Child Protective Services and provide the necessary care and protection for the children of Lassen County until such time that a working Child Protective Service is in place in Lassen County. This

recommendation is not made lightly and is the direct result of the nature and number of serious complaints and accusations from several sources over a long period of time, within Lassen County. The 2003-2004 Grand Jury has reviewed the history of Lassen County Grand Juries' CPS reports and found that some issues have been ongoing since 1989, along with major problems found in more than one year. (Attachment C - Consolidation of Grand Jury Reports from 1989 to 2003) Lassen County has not shown the ability to "fix the problem." For the future of Lassen County's children, this cycle of wrongdoing and mismanagement must end.

ATTACHMENTED TO THE END OF THIS REPORT:

- A: Oversight Report of Child Welfare Services in Lassen County, 2002
- B: Final Report on the Restructure of Lassen County H&HS
- C: Consolidation of Grand Jury Reports from 1989 to 2003
- D: Child Welfare Agency Review, On-Site Review May 19, 20, 2004
- E: California's Child and Family Services Review, June 2004
- F: Review of Lassen County CWS by Gary Kupfer

STATE OF CALIFORNIA - HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

SEP 16 2002



Mr. Thomas Keeffer
Lassen County Department of Health
P.O. Box 1359
Susanville, California 96130

Dear Mr. Keeffer:

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Children's Services Operations Bureau (CSOB) conducted a case review of the provision of Child Welfare Services (CWS) by Lassen County in July 2002. The case review was conducted to obtain information regarding the quality of services provided by Lassen County and to determine whether the County is adhering to CWS regulations. Cases reviewed were obtained from both the County CWS agency and the County Probation agency. The on-site portion of the review was conducted from July 8 to July 9, 2002.

Enclosed is the report, which contains separate sections regarding the review of CWS agency and Probation agency cases. The specific questions reviewed for CWS agency cases focused on timely responses to emergency response referrals, contacts with the child, health and education information given to the out-of-home care provider, medical/dental examinations, and independent living plans.

A statistically valid random sample of Emergency Response and CWS cases that were open during the month of February, March and April 2002 were used to answer the compliance review questions.

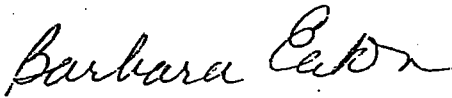
The CWS agency portion of the report shows the Lassen County Department of Health and Human Services in compliance for two of the review questions and out-of-compliance for five of the review questions. Please review the CWS agency portion of the report and contact us to indicate whether you agree or disagree with the contents and findings of the report. If you disagree and wish to provide additional information, please contact our office immediately and provide us with your written comments within 30 days of the date of this letter. If we do not hear from you within 30 days of the date of this letter, the report will be considered final.

As discussed in the report, a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) will be required for each of the case review questions found below the acceptable compliance level. The CAP will be due 30 days from the date of the final report.

Mr. Keeffer
Page Two

The review staff wishes to express their appreciation for the cooperation received from your staff during the review process. If you or your staff have any questions or comments about this report, or if you would like assistance in any area, including the development of your CAP, please contact Rosa Estes, your CSOB Consultant, at (916) 445-2817.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Barbara Eaton".

BARBARA EATON, Chief
Children's Services Operations Bureau

Enclosure

c: Margaret Crosby, Deputy Director
Jon Grant, CWS Program Manager

bc: S. Pizzini, 17-18
D. Dodds 17-17
P. Aguiar, 19-73
R. Markell, 19-78
W. Beers, 19-69
Adoptions, 19-69
B. Fife, 19-87
G. Freitas, 19-90
S. St. Mary, 19-00
D. Anderson, 19-90
V. Vaught, 19-90
R. Estes, 19-90
CSOB Compliance Files
CSOB Chron

Common/csob/Compliance Reviw/Lassen/CWS/7-02ComplianceReview/Lassen CWS
Report Cover Letter Rev7-16-02.doc

**OVERSIGHT REPORT
OF
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
IN
LASSEN COUNTY**

On-Site Case Review Dates: July 8 to July 9, 2002

**Report Prepared by: Rosa Estes, CSOB Consultant
Children's Services Operations Bureau
California Department of Social Services**

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CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

1. Contacts

If a social worker determines that Child Protective Services (CPS) intervention is necessary to protect a child from risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation, there are minimum standards that must be met to assess the risk to the child and to ensure the continued protection of the child. In order to provide this safeguard, face-to-face contacts with the child are necessary.

C 1. Did the social worker initiate an in-person investigation within the required time frame?

*Found in 21 of the 46 ER cases reviewed
Found in 8 of the 8 FM cases reviewed
Found in 20 of the 23 FR cases reviewed*

C 3. Was face-to-face contact made with the child within the latest required time frame?

*Found in 4 of the 10 FM cases reviewed
Found in 12 of the 23 FR cases reviewed
Found in 4 of the 17 PP cases reviewed*

2. Health and Education Information

Division 31 Regulations require that the out-of-home care provider be given the child's background information at the time of placement. The information includes, but is not limited to, educational, medical and behavioral histories.

HE 1. Was there documentation indicating that the out-of-home care provider was given the child's health and education information?

*Found in 21 of the 23 FR cases reviewed
Found in 13 of the 14 PP cases reviewed*

3. Medical Examinations

The Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) program requires that the child receive a medical examination at the time of placement. Additionally, the CHDP program requires periodic physical examinations while the child is in placement.

MED. 1. Did the child receive the most current preventive physical health examination in accordance with the CHDP periodicity schedule?

*Found in 15 of the 21 FR cases reviewed
Found in 15 of the 17 PP cases reviewed*

I. CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

Public Law 96-272, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 addressed widespread program inconsistency in the nation's child welfare system. Federal funding is based on states' adherence to the federal authority. The specific manner in which the state meets Federal requirements is described in a mandated state plan, one component of which describes monitoring and evaluating the provision of Child Welfare Services (CWS).

A. Purpose

The purpose of the compliance review is to obtain baseline data to determine specific areas of compliance and noncompliance with CWS regulations and to help identify county CWS program areas that may need improvement.

B. Scope

A statistically valid random sample of cases receiving Emergency Response (ER), Family Maintenance (FM), Family Reunification (FR), Permanent Placement (PP), and Independent Living Program (ILP) services were selected for the review process. (Of note is that the same question used for review ER referrals was also used to review FM and FR cases.)

To determine compliance with Division 31 requirements, questions focusing on contacts with the child, health and education information given to the out-of-home care provider, medical/dental examinations and independent living plans were used.

C. Methodology

The methodology for the case review utilized a question-specific focus instead of one that is case-specific. Compliance levels are determined from the number of "Yes" and "No" responses documented to each question reviewed.

D. Findings For Review Questions

Of the seven items reviewed, two were found to meet or exceed the required 90% compliance level and five failed to meet the required 90% compliance level. The specific findings for each review question can be found on pages two through three. For overall results of the Child Welfare Agency Review, see page seven.

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

5. Dental Examinations

The CHDP program also requires an annual dental examination for children three years of age and older who are receiving out-of-home care services.

MED. 2. Is there evidence of an annual dental examination?

Found in 15 of the 19 FR cases reviewed

Found in 13 of the 16 PP cases reviewed

6. Independent Living Program (ILP) Plans

The Independent Living Program (ILP) plan is designed to assist a child in out-of-home care who is over 16 years of age with obtaining training, job skills, employment and housing to prepare him/her for emancipation.

ILP 1. Did the case plan incorporate the transitional Independent living plan?

Found in 2 of the 5 ILP cases reviewed

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

E. Observations/Technical Assistance

Emergency Response Referrals

The CWS agency did not achieve compliance in this area. "No" responses were given to this question when documentation of a face-to-face contact with the child within the "immediate" or "10 day" time frame assigned to the referral could not be located in either CWS/CMS or the case file. Five "immediate" referrals documented face-to-face contacts that were 1 to 19 days late. Sixteen "ten-day" referrals documented face-to-face contacts that were 1 to 30 days late.

To achieve compliance in this area, an initial response must be made within the "immediate" or "10-day" time frame designated for each referral. Additionally, documentation regarding the initial response must specify which child(ren) were seen.

Contacts

The CWS agency is to be commended for achieving compliance in the area of initial contacts for continuing cases (C1). Initial responses were timely in all of the Family Maintenance cases reviewed and most of the Family Reunification cases reviewed.

The CWS agency did not achieve compliance in the area of monthly contact (C3). "No" responses were given when neither the case record nor CWS/CMS documented a contact with the child in the review month and a valid visit exception could not be located. Additionally, several FM, FR, and PP cases did not have contacts in the months previous to the review month, including a case where the child was placed in a group home.

To achieve compliance in the area of monthly contacts, the social worker must have a monthly face-to-face contact with a child receiving services. Documentation of the contact must clearly identify that the child was seen by the social worker and include the date the contact occurred. Justification for less than monthly visits must be approved and documented in the case record. Visit exceptions are not permitted for children placed in group homes.

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

Health and Education Information

The CWS agency is to be commended for achieving compliance with the requirement to provide health and education information to the out-of-home care provider at the time of placement. Documentation that this information was provided to the out-of-home care provider was found in all but two of the FR cases and all but one of the PP cases reviewed.

To sustain compliance in this area, health and education information regarding the child must be provided to the out-of-home care provider at the time of the placement. The social worker providing the information should document that the information was provided and the date it was provided in the case record. For cases where children are placed with Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) and the health and education information is provided to the FFA representative, there should be additional documentation to reflect when the information was given to the actual foster care provider.

Medical Examinations

The CWS agency did not achieve compliance in the area of current physical examinations. Reasons for noncompliance were either because there was no documentation of a current physical examination, or because the documentation was not complete.

To achieve compliance, the social worker should ensure that examinations are completed within the required time frames. Additionally, the case record should contain information regarding the examinations that include the exact date (month/day/year) that the examination was completed and the name of the doctor or clinic who performed the examination.

Dental Examinations

The CWS agency did not achieve compliance in the area of current dental examinations. Reasons for noncompliance were either because there was no documentation of a current physical examination, documentation reflected the examination was late, or because the documentation was not complete.

To achieve compliance, the social worker should ensure that examinations are completed within the required time frames. Additionally, the case record should contain information regarding the examinations that include the exact date (month/day/year) that the examination was completed and the name of the dentist or clinic who performed the examination.

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

Independent Living Program (ILP) Plans

The CWS agency did not achieve compliance in this area. Reasons for noncompliance were either because the Transitional Independent Living Plans (TILP) had not been developed within the required time frame, or because the TILP was not signed or dated.

To achieve compliance in this area, the County must develop a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) for each child in placement by age 16. If the case record does not include a TILP, the case record must include documentation of the child's refusal of Independent Living Program (ILP) services or documentation that ILP services would be inappropriate because the child is physically or mentally unable to benefit from such services. If the child has been placed out-of-county, the social worker in the sending county is responsible for developing the TILP. TILPs completed solely by the group home agency staff are not acceptable documentation for meeting this requirement.

Rejected cases

During the compliance review, 14 cases were rejected from the review sample. Five of the cases were rejected because the case record did not document a case plan for voluntary services signed by the parent, or a voluntary case plan update that covered the review month. Seven of the cases were rejected because the case record did not document either a dispositional court order for the child or an order from a current review hearing ordering or continuing services to be provided. Please take the necessary actions to correct the reporting status of these cases.

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

F.

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY OVERALL COMPLIANCE REVIEW RESULTS

July 8 -9, 2002
Lassen County

OVERALL COMPLIANCE	
90% and Above	Below 90%
No Action Required	Corrective Action Required

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

C 1. Did the social worker initiate an in-person investigation within the required time frame?

	46%
--	-----

CONTACTS

C 1. Did the social worker initiate an in-person investigation within the required time frame?

X	
	40%

C 3. Was face-to-face contact made with the child within the latest regulatory time frame?

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

HE 1. Was there documentation indicating that the out-of-home care provider was given the child's health and education information?

X	
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MEDICAL AND DENTAL

MED 1. Did the child receive the most current preventive physical health examination in accordance with the CHDP periodicity schedule?

	79%
	80%

MED 2. Is there evidence of an annual dental examination?

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM PLAN

ILP 1. Did the case plan incorporate the transitional independent living plan?

	40%
--	-----

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

G. Corrective Action Required

Questions that did not meet the 90% compliance level will require a corrective action plan with the exception described below.

COMPLIANCE LEVELS FROM 80% TO 89%

For those questions that achieved compliance levels from 80 percent to 89 percent as determined by the County compliance review, the County will have the option of reviewing a sample of cases during the first quarter (90 days) following the on-site review, and proceed as described below.

- The County must submit evidence to the CSOB in the form of a Quarterly Progress Report (QPR) that documents a 90% or higher compliance level for each question.
- If the QPR documents a 90% or higher compliance level and the CSOB determines consistency in review standards used by the County by conducting an Inter-rater Reliability Test (IRT), the questions will be determined to be in compliance, and no CAP will be required.
- If the QPR does not report a 90% compliance level for the question, a formal CAP will be required and due within 30 days from the date the QPR was submitted to CSOB.
- If the County reports a 90% compliance level, but the CSOB determines a lack of consistency in review standards after conducting an IRT, a formal CAP will be required and is due within 30 days from the date the County is notified regarding the IRT results.

If the County chooses this option, the assigned CSOB Consultant must be informed immediately and the County needs to indicate whether any special technical assistance is necessary.

OR

The County may also choose to take direct action to develop a formal CAP for all questions found at compliance levels below 90% (including questions at 80% to 89%) following the guidelines under Section H.

MED 2. Is there evidence of an annual dental examination?

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

COMPLIANCE LEVELS BELOW 80%

The following questions did not meet the required 90% compliance threshold and require a Corrective Action Plan (CAP):

EMERGENCY RESPONSE CASES

- C 1. Did the social worker initiate an in-person investigation within the required time frame?

CASES OTHER THAN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- C 3. Was face-to-face contact made with the child within the latest regulatory time frame?

- MED 1. Did the child receive the most current preventive physical health examination in accordance with the CHDP periodicity schedule?

- ILP 1. Did the case plan incorporate the transitional independent living plan?

H. Corrective Action Plan

The Corrective Action Plan (CAP) should specifically identify for each question found out-of-compliance: 1) statement(s) of the problem(s); 2) cause(s) of the problem(s); 3) plan objective for correcting the problem(s); 4) implementation and time frames for implementing the corrective actions; which includes a projection of when compliance will be achieved, and 5) an evaluation component to measure progress.

The CAP is to be sent to the Children's Services Operations Bureau (CSOB) and is due within 30 days of the date of the final oversight report. (Please refer to Section G regarding questions found at compliance levels from 80% to 89% for different CAP due dates, if appropriate.) Your CSOB consultant is available to provide technical assistance in the development and implementation of the CAP.

CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CASE REVIEW

I. Progress Reports

As part of your CAP, you will be required to conduct internal corrective action evaluations and submit the results of those evaluations to the CSOB. These progress reports should be submitted to the CSOB every three months and only need to focus on those questions found out-of-compliance. The progress reports should continue until the CSOB has determined that sustained compliance has been achieved.

To confirm that the findings from the internal evaluations are consistent with review standards, the CSOB will periodically conduct inter-rater reliability reviews. The cases will be selected from the same sample of cases reviewed by the county as part of the internal evaluation process.

Please contact your CSOB consultant if you have any questions regarding the CAP, progress reports, internal evaluations or inter-rater reliability reviews.

II. PROBATION AGENCY CASE REVIEW

Public Law 96-272, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 addressed widespread program inconsistency in the nation's child welfare system. Federal funding is based on states' adherence to the federal authority. The specific manner in which the state meets Federal requirements is described in a mandated state plan, one component of which describes monitoring and evaluating the provision of Child Welfare Services (CWS).

In addition, the federal Title IV-E foster care program was developed with the intent that it would benefit children who were victims of abuse and/or neglect. Included in this population are some probation children who are appropriate to serve under Title IV-E. Regulations contained in Division 31 of the Manual of Policies and Procedures specify county probation department requirements for children placed in out-of-home care funded through Title IV-E.

A. Purpose

The purpose of the compliance review is to obtain baseline data to determine specific areas of compliance and noncompliance with CWS regulations and to help identify county CWS program areas that may need improvement.

B. Scope

A random sample of cases receiving CWS services were selected for the review process.

To determine compliance with Division 31 requirements, a total of seven questions were reviewed. The questions focused on the completion of case plans, contacts with the child, health and education information given to the out-of-home care provider, and medical/dental examinations. A question regarding independent living plans was also reviewed. There were no applicable cases involving children placed out-of-state available for review.

C. Methodology

The methodology for the case review utilized a question-specific focus instead of one that is case-specific. Compliance levels are determined from the number of "Yes" and "No" responses documented to each question reviewed.

D. Findings For Review Questions

Of the seven questions reviewed, five were found to meet or exceed the required 90% compliance level and one failed to meet the required 90% compliance level. The remaining question could not be reviewed because there were no cases for a child that was placed out of state. The specific findings for each review question can be found on pages three through four. For overall results of the Probation Case Review, see page seven.

PROBATION AGENCY CASE REVIEW

1. Case Plans

A case plan ensures that the child receives protection and proper case management and that services are provided to the child and parents or other caretakers as appropriate. The case plan consists of a written document that is developed based upon an assessment of the circumstances that required CWS intervention.

CP 1. Was the initial case plan completed within the required time frame?

Found in 0 of the 4 cases reviewed

2. Contacts

There are minimum standards that must be met to assess the risk to the child and to ensure the continued protection of the child. In order to provide this safeguard, face-to-face contacts with the child are necessary.

C 3. Was face-to-face contact made with the child within the latest required time frame?

Found in 5 of the 5 cases reviewed

3. Health and Education Information

Division 31 Regulations require that the out-of-home care provider be given the child's background information at the time of placement. The information includes, but is not limited to, educational, medical and behavioral histories.

HE 1. Was there documentation indicating that the out-of-home care provider was given the child's health and education information?

Found in 4 of the 5 cases reviewed

PROBATION AGENCY CASE REVIEW

4. Medical Examinations

The Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) program requires that the child receive a medical examination at the time of placement. Additionally, the CHDP program requires periodic physical examinations while the child is in placement.

MED. 1. Did the child receive the most current preventive physical health examination in accordance with the CHDP periodicity schedule?

Found in 5 of the 5 cases reviewed

5. Dental Examinations

The CHDP program also requires an annual dental examination for children three years of age and older who are receiving out-of-home care services.

MED. 2. Is there evidence of an annual dental examination?

Found in 4 of the 5 cases reviewed

6. Independent Living Program (ILP) Plans

The Independent Living Program (ILP) plan is designed to assist a child in out-of-home care who is over 16 years of age with obtaining training, job skills, employment and housing to prepare him/her for emancipation.

ILP 1. Did the case plan incorporate the transitional independent living plan?

Found in 2 of the 2 cases reviewed

7. Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)

Under ICPC, a child cannot be sent to a placement out-of-state unless the receiving state has approved the placement and the sending state has the authority to place the child out-of-state.

ICPC 1. Did the case record document that the child was placed out-of-state after an approved ICPC 100A was received?

We were unable to review for this question from the sample cases selected.

PROBATION AGENCY CASE REVIEW

E. Observations/Technical Assistance

Case Plans

Lassen County Probation did not achieve compliance in this area. Of the 4 cases found out-of-compliance, all case plans reviewed were missing required elements. Additionally, three of the case plans were not completed within the required time frames.

To achieve compliance in this area, case plans need to be completed, including all required elements and a supervisor signature, within 30 days of the initial face-to-face contact, or by the date of the dispositional hearing, whichever comes first.

Contacts

The Probation agency is to be commended for achieving compliance in this area. Monthly face-to-face contacts were made in all five cases reviewed. Contacts were timely and the narratives clearly identified that the child was seen by the probation officer.

Health and Education Information

The Probation agency is to be commended for achieving compliance in this area. The County's procedures for documenting that the out-of-home care provider received the child's health and education information appear to be very effective. All of the cases reviewed contained the required documentation.

In order to sustain compliance in this area, the County should continue to provide the child's out-of-home care provider with the child's health and education information. For children placed with Foster Family Agencies, the county should ensure that the out-of-home care provider receives this information, and that the date this is done is documented.

PROBATION AGENCY CASE REVIEW

Medical Examinations

The Probation agency should be commended for achieving compliance in this area. Documentation of current medical examinations was found in all five of the cases reviewed.

To maintain compliance in this area, the County should continue to ensure that medical examinations are provided timely and that the date and provider of the examination are documented in the case file.

Dental Examinations

The Probation agency is commended for achieving compliance in this area.

To maintain compliance, the County should continue to ensure that examinations are completed within the required time frames. Additionally, the case record should continue to contain information, regarding the examinations that include the exact date (month/day/year) that the examination was completed and the name of the doctor or clinic who performed the examination.

Independent Living Program (ILP) Plans

The Probation agency is commended for achieving compliance in this area.

To maintain compliance in this area, the probation officer should ensure that a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) is developed for each child in placement by age 16. If the case record does not include a TILP the case record should document either the child's refusal of ILP services or should document that Independent Living Program (ILP) services would be inappropriate because the child is physically or mentally unable to benefit from such services. A TILP completed solely by the group home agency staff is not acceptable documentation for meeting this requirement.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children

We were not able to review for this question from the sample cases selected. Please contact your CWS consultant if you require technical assistance in this area.

PROBATION AGENCY CASE REVIEW

F.

PROBATION AGENCY OVERALL COMPLIANCE REVIEW RESULTS

Lassen County
June 11, 2002

OVERALL COMPLIANCE	
90% and Above	Below 90%
No Action Required	Corrective Action Required

CASE PLAN

CP 1. Was the initial case plan completed within the required time frame?

	0%
--	----

CONTACTS

C 3. Was face-to-face contact made with the child within the latest regulatory time frame?

X	
---	--

HEALTH AND EDUCATION INFORMATION

HE 1. Was there documentation indicating that the out-of-home care provider was given the child's health and education information?

X	
---	--

MEDICAL AND DENTAL

MED 1. Did the child receive the most current preventive physical health examination in accordance with the CHDP periodicity schedule?

X	
---	--

MED 2. Is there evidence of an annual dental examination?

X	
---	--

INDEPENDENT LIVING PLAN

ILP 1. Did the case plan incorporate the transitional independent living plan?

X	
---	--

INTERSTATE COMPACT ON THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN

ICPC 1. Did the case record document that the child was placed out-of-state after an approved ICPC 100A was received?

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PROBATION AGENCY CASE REVIEW

G. Corrective Action Required

Question that did not meet the 90% compliance level will require corrective action efforts. Refer to instructions below.

COMPLIANCE LEVELS BELOW 80%

The following questions did not meet the required 90% compliance threshold and require a Corrective Action Plan (CAP): *(select only those that apply and delete the rest)*

CP 1. Was the initial case plan completed within the required time frame?

H. Corrective Action Plan

The Corrective Action Plan (CAP) should specifically identify for each question found out-of-compliance: 1) statement(s) of the problem(s); 2) cause(s) of the problem(s); 3) plan objective for correcting the problem(s); 4) implementation and time frames for implementing the corrective actions; which includes a projection of when compliance will be achieved, and 5) an evaluation component to measure progress.

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I. Progress Reports

As part of your CAP, you will be required to conduct internal corrective action evaluations and submit the results of those evaluations to the CSOB. These progress reports should be submitted to the CSOB every three months and only need to focus on those questions found out-of-compliance. The progress reports should continue until the CSOB has determined that sustained compliance has been achieved.

To confirm that the findings from the internal evaluations are consistent with review standards, the CSOB will periodically conduct inter-rater reliability reviews. The cases will be selected from the same sample of cases reviewed by the county as part of the internal evaluation process.

Please contact your CSOB consultant if you have any questions regarding the CAP, progress reports, internal evaluations or inter-rater reliability reviews.

FINAL REPORT
On the
Restructure of Lassen County Health and Human
Services

By
Dr. Thomas D. Gauthier

December 19, 2003

FINAL REPORT
On the
Restructure of Lassen County Health and Human Services

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I The Assignment – August 15, 2003

- A. Study the organization and operational effectiveness of Lassen County's Health and Human Services Department.**
- B. Evaluate business practices and leadership/management resources.**
- C. Respond to appropriate sections of the Lassen County Grand Jury Report (2002-2003).**
- D. Prepare recommendations for the restructuring and rehabilitation of Lassen County's Health and Human Services Department.**

II Findings

- A. The Organization:** The management structure of Health and Human Services insulated the County Executive and governing body from both day-to-day operational outcomes and from the unique complexities of the department's fiscal systems. The impact of this insulation has allowed operational problems that ran afoul of state and federal regulations to exist unchallenged.
- B. The Management:** Top management operated with a narrow span of control. Measurement and reporting systems were not in place which engendered "management by anecdote" as the style of choice. Some incumbent upper-middle managers had been allowed to rise to

their personal level incompetence, lacking the basic technical expertise to oversee the functions under their control. There is no formal schooling and virtually no experience in leadership skills. The tendency for untrained people placed into leadership positions is to revert to personality types and over-compensate when faced with the problems that existed in H&HS. This situation not only resulted in the personnel problems seen, but also the "cover ups" of critical failures, such as Child Protective Services.

C. The Fiscal System:

The Fiscal System was found to be complex and subject to a variety of rules, regulations, and restrictions imposed by the more than 65 different revenue sources. Revenues were not optimized. Discipline in the collections process was lax, resulting in the recovery of less revenue than was actually earned by county services provided. Fiscal management was entwined with the administration structure resulting in little if any enforcement of process requirements (management lacked the knowledge to recognize the problem), or creative activity to locate new/additional revenue sources, i.e. grants.

D. Child Protective Services:

Child Protective Services was at the core of the Grand Jury's negative report. With the help of my in-house team of Debbie Henson and Gerrie Dekker, and the four investigators solicited from the California Department of Social Services, we uncovered the extent of the problems within CPS. From the Deputy Director down through the recently terminated CPS supervisor there was gross negligence and blatant incompetence in the management of the unit. Hiring practices were lax as reflected in the incompetent work of the core of incumbent social workers. The unit

was found to be totally out of compliance with state laws and regulations. Records showed that it had been out of compliance for two years, with full knowledge of the H&HS director and the Deputy Director. There was no evidence of remedial action on the part of management. Performance was so negative that principal mandated reporters within Lassen county had stopped communication. Schools, the city police and Sheriff, and other juvenile social services agencies had lost respect and trust for CPS. Admonitions from the Superior Court were frequent, but to no avail. The report from state officials indicated that the State Department of Social Services was at the point of shutting down the county run CPS and moving it to state control. (This was avoided by the actions of Debbie Henson.)

E. Mental Health Department:

The Mental Health Department had over time developed a seriously negative reputation in the community. This reputation had produced adversarial relationships with other departments and stakeholders in community mental health issues – primarily within the juvenile justice system, community medical services providers, and the Board of Supervisors. The management structure was “vertical”- providing the same insulation from operational information extant throughout H&HS. Discipline in the administrative function was lax, resulting in poor fiscal record keeping, under collection of revenues earned, and unproductive scheduling of clinicians time. Morale among clerical personnel was bad and turnover high due to unclear lines of authority and poor communication practices.

F. General: Management of Health and Human Services had paid little or no attention to fundamental management issues such as succession planning, programmed employee development, and focused leadership training for management. Also not in evidence were measurement and reporting systems designed to track progress and compliance in critical performance areas. The department had become a target – an undefended target – for anyone with a real or perceived grievance. Response to “attacks” entailed creating excuses rather than taking remedial action. Leadership for the process of building pride within and respect from without the department was painfully missing.

III Actions Taken

A. Restructuring – The Model: Effective in-depth organizational change requires the dismantling and carefully reassembly of an organization. It's a paper exercise first with a defined process of study and decision making (not included in this report, but available for review). The exercise highlighted the need to remove at least two levels of management, to tighten up the structure, and to make the operations more visibly accountable to the community it served. It also dictated that the fiscal control responsibility be isolated from line management and given definite responsibility for optimizing revenues and overseeing the clerical activities needed to record and collect earned revenue. The model that evolved removed the singular nature of Health and Human Services and replaced it with four functions organized around the specialized services each delivered. The first is the *Behavioral and Public Health Services Department*, comprised of

Mental Health, Alcohol and Drugs, Public and Environmental Health, and the offices of the Public Guardian, and Veterans Services. Second is the *Family and Child Protective Services Department*, comprised of Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, and In Home Social Services. Third is the *Community Social Services Department*, comprised of General Relief Services, Eligibility Services, and California Children's Services. Fourth is the *Fiscal Management Services*, comprised of the fiscal staff and management from the former H&HS, now reporting to the Deputy CAO in the newly formed *Office of the CAO*.

B. Behavioral and Public Health Services Department:

Following a complete recruitment and selection process a new Director, Mr. Kevin Mannel, has been hired for this new department. He will report on January 1, 2004. Since mid November he has been kept advised and had input into the actions of the Interim Director impacting this department. This has primarily involved restructuring Mental Health.

C. Mental Health Department: The Mental Health Department has been restructured around four primary functions – Clinic, Administration and Records, Special Community Programs, and Quality Oversight. Each of these unique functions is headed by a Program Manager, Supervising Therapist, or Chief, and report directly to the Deputy Director. This structure carries the expressed purpose of improving productivity, accuracy, measurement, and accountability. The overarching goals are to return the unit to fiscal soundness, and to rebuild public confidence in the Mental Health service.

D. Alcohol and Drug: Under the new Behavioral Health unit, Alcohol and Drug will continue to operate under Deputy Director Michael Beard. The establishment of a Medical Director under the Behavioral Health director has the potential to underwrite additional revenue streams and programs for Alcohol and Drug. No structural changes were needed in this unit.

E. Public and Environmental Health, Public Guardian, and the Veterans' Services Office: No restructuring was done in these departments. Public and Environmental Health are operated with state employees under a contract with the State of California. The Public Guardian's Office, under Dan Bruce, continues to deliver exceptional professional services. The Veterans' Services Office is under the new leadership of Larry Rogers. In his short tenure he has transformed this office into a modern and demonstrably effective outreach to the veterans of Lassen county.

F. Family and Child Protective Services: The Family and Child Protective Services unit was initially plunged into the multi-tasks of investigating apparent malfeasance by CPS social workers, addressing multiple elements of non-compliance with state law, reviewing all cases for child safety issues, out-reach to estranged public agencies, and reestablishing the practice as a professional, measurable, accountable public service function. After a process of recruitment and selection, incumbent Debbie Henson was named Director of the department, reporting to the CAO and serving "at will". It is under her leadership that the following outcomes have been realized to date. Director Henson developed a compliance plan with the State of California that will have Lassen county back in full compliance by June 2004.

Offending personnel have been identified and removed from county employment. There is a marked increase in field activity as reflected in the increase of cases from 95 in July 2003 to 263 at this writing. Specialized training in conducting due diligence searches, file maintenance, and court notice completion is under way. Recruitment to fill the badly depleted ranks of social workers is under way. Director Henson has arranged, under federal sponsorship, for all CPS social workers to attend the Sacramento Institute of Criminology for P.O.S.T certification and deputizing (equivalent to a parole officer) by SIC. Director Henson has reestablished positive working relationships with county schools, law enforcement, and the courts – as well as with internal county departments.

G. Community Social Services:

The Community Social

Services Department is now headed by a Director reporting to the CAO and serving "at will". Melody Brawley emerged from the recruitment and selection process as the best candidate and has accepted the challenge. With the smaller department, the position of Program manager will remain unfilled and it is recommended that it be abolished in future. There was no major restructuring internal to this unit. Director Brawley, however, is faced with many program changes dictated by the federal government and the new state administration. She is highly experienced in this field and is capable of leading these changes to the best outcomes for Lassen County.

IV Report on Current State – December 19, 2003

- A.** The Office of the CAO has been established. The Fiscal staff and management, under Diana Wemple from the old H&HS is actively providing guidance and oversight for the new units. Improvements are already in evidence.
- B.** Family and Child Protective Services is progressing under the stress of critically short staffing (a total of four case workers for nearly 270 cases). Recruitment will alleviate the problem early in the year, but coupled with the additional work of rebuilding compliance and outreach, Director Henson will need all of the support available from the CAO and other department heads. Overall, the reestablishment of CPS is a success story.
- C.** The Mental Health Department is already showing real improvement in productivity under the new administration structure. Therapists and Case Workers are now scheduled for 75% of their billable hours with clients as they transition into a 5 day work week. Coding and reports necessary for Medi-Cal billing are now produced in a timely manner. Collections for non-Medi-Cal client services is up and current. Dr. Greene has introduced clinical protocols that will raise the professional level of the service. Selection of clinicians in future should be conducted with the new model of a "teaching" environment in mind. Any dysfunctional internal dissent to the new organization must be dealt with so as to avoid undermining the work of major contributing "change agents" like Dr. Greene, MD, Pam Morgan, RN., Jim Jackson, MSW, and others within Mental Health's staff.

- D. All other units are functioning well and cooperating among themselves to iron out last minute details generated by the division of functions.

V Transition and Sustaining Actions

- A. A crucial factor in the transition to a new and successful operation for all units is *the need for full collaboration and cooperation* with other county departments. Old animosities between Mental Health, Probation, CPS, the Public Defender, and the District Attorney must be laid aside for the greater good of county government.

- B. Management Training and Development *must be raised to a priority*. From top to bottom, and from basic supervisory skills to leadership techniques, a concerted effort to intervene with new technique and insight will be an opportunity to "fix" systemic problems and prevent them from coming around again. Additionally, raising education levels of staff should be made programmatic and support developed for those who avail themselves of the opportunity. We must establish governing principles of Professional Services delivered by Profession Management under Professional Leadership. Professional Services requires knowledge and action on the subjects of process and techniques, laws and regulations, and specialty skills. Professional Management requires knowledge and action on the subjects of resources, revenues, procedures, compliances, and outcomes. Professional Leadership drives out fear, shows respect for individuals, injects excitement and enthusiasm into the process, avoids anger, and is always a "learner" – open to the new and innovative.

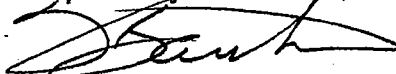
- C. *Measurement and monitoring* must be introduced into the process of managing county functions. Critical performance points need to be identified, quantified, and formulated into regular reports by department heads to the CAO – and ultimately to the Board of Supervisors. This was found to be a major void in the old system.

VI Summary Comments

The new organization is in its infancy. It has already begun to operate in the new mode. There are still a small but persistent group of resisters among the ranks. They will need to gain an understanding of what's expected, or be helped to seek other opportunities. The organization needs careful nurturing from the administration. This is not the time to hash over old grievances or serendipitously find fault. Give it a chance and it will indeed become what it has been called – a new direction for Lassen county government and social services.

Thanks to all who have allowed me to be of service to my county and fellow citizens. I have respected the trust you placed in me and have worked diligently to meet your expectations. I have found real talent, and not a few new friends, among the staff and management. Their work is just beginning as mine comes to a close. They deserve the trust, support, and encouragement that you've shown me throughout this effort. I look forward to being called on as mentor and counselor in future, wherever I can serve to move the process forward.

Respectfully Submitted,



Thomas D. Gauthier, Psy.D.

CONSOLIDATION OF GRAND JURY REPORTS FROM 1989 TO 2003
IN REGARDS TO CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES, AS MANAGED
BY LASSEN COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Grand Jury Report: 1989-1990

Grand Jury (GJ) final report notes that the Child Protective Service (CPS) supervisor did not have the education or field exposure necessary to properly supervise Social Workers. The report also is critical about the lack of training and supervision in CPS. There is a problem in filling vacant positions and a high turn over rate with staff moving to counties with more equitable pay. The Grand Jury recommends a salary adjustment for Social Workers based on a wage survey

Grand Jury reports that job descriptions are not completed for Social Workers and employees are working out of class and with bad job description.

GJ recommends a study be completed by each department head or private company and a job description be prepared for each position. Suggest those job descriptions be prepared and updated regularly.

Grand Jury Report: 1990-1991

GJ reports of complaints about Health & Human Services (H&HS) and CPS. The GJ makes an investigation into these departments.

The GJ reported that the Director of H&HS authorized the expenditure, from their budget, of \$30,000.00 to hire a private attorney to fight the Grand Jury. A fine is levied against the Director of H&HS for failure to appear in the investigation and the fine of

\$900 is paid from the Welfare Budget.

H&HS Director Kelly ordered employees not to talk to the Board of Supervisors or GJ. Reports of fear and intimidation being used in the Department.

GJ finds that the H&HS Director and the CPS Director frequently override recommendations of psychologists.

H&HS Director and CPS set their own restrictions on confidentiality above and beyond limitations of law.

H&HS refuse court and GJ documents and information. H&HS are involved in dismissal of new employee for failure to falsify state documents.

GJ finds that hiring and promotions are based on loyalty to the H&HS Director.

CPS is found to be violating State Laws in regard to checking on foster placements and mandatory reporting to other agencies.

CPS criticized for child spending a weekend with a Social Worker.

H&HS Director is accused of lying to the Grand Jury about substantial issues.

GJ reports a very high job turn over, two employees out on stress and six employees looking for work in other areas.

Recommendation by the Grand Jury:

Dismissal of the H&HS Director, an investigation of all departments under H&HS with a goal to reorganize that Department. Preparation of job descriptions and qualifications

for department heads.

Final Report:

Board of Supervisors failed to respond to a confidential midterm report by the end of GJ, July 15, 1991. GJ recommends that the 1991-1992 GJ follow up the investigation.

Grand Jury Report: 1991-1992

The med-term report of the investigation into H&HS and CPS was released to the Board of Supervisors in May 1991, with no response to the 1990-1991 GJ. The Board responded to the 1991-1992 GJ with the information that they would need a separate investigation into H&HS and CPS. The GJ pressed the Board for some answers or conclusions. The Board informed the GJ there were more important problems. They say there is a threat of a law suit by county employees.

H&HS Director resigns as of June 1992. There are no answers from the Board on their investigation into H&HS and CPS.

Grand Jury Report: 1992-1993

Grand Jury gives up on the H&HS, CPS problem, no end in sight.

Grand Jury Report: 1993-1994:

The GJ is refused admittance to a foster family care facility (under H&HS direction). The GJ is put off until the end of the GJ term and visit is not made.

Grand Jury Report: 1994-1995:

GJ discovers a problem of cooperation between H&HS and CPS.

Deputy Director of CPS reprimands Social Worker for buying \$3.49 worth of donuts for an interagency meeting out of CPS funds.

Recommendation of GJ: Deputy Director evaluates the impact that her management methods have on employees.

Grand Jury Report: 1995-1996:

GJ receives complaints from employees of H&HS asserting fabrication of payroll records, employee complaint ignored and sexual harassment of CPS supervisor by Deputy Director of H&HS. No conclusion is made in the report about these complaints.

Grand Jury Report: 1996-1997:

GJ investigates CPS based on complaints from employees. Complaints allege problems with referral logs and inappropriate decisions by inexperienced staff. GJ finds that referral logs were altered before being presented to GJ.

The Referral Log indicates that an employee who was not hired until April 1996 was assigned cases before their hire date and had signed log sheets prior to that date. In fact, according to the records, this employee was assigned a referral and completed the case more than a month before their hire date.

Hiring practices and background checks are done in a questionable inconsistent manner.

Management of H&HS and CPS have no clear understanding of the type of individual to hire to fill management's supervisors or staff positions.

Personnel have been hired with little or no social work exposure or educational background in the field. A number of resumes, submitted by applicants, contain inaccurate information with no background investigation completed prior to hire.

Very large turn over reported in CPS.

Conclusion by Grand Jury; H&HS and CPS lack strong leadership.

Grand Jury Report: 1997-1998

GJ continued the investigation from the 1996-1997 GJ and found the turn over rate of staff in CPS extremely high, far higher than other departments of County Government. They found that the pay scale may be a contributing cause. However, strained work environment with an inordinate feeling of anxiety along with an inferior physical plant appear to be significant contributing factors.

Experienced employees are resigning, transferring or being terminated because of personality problems with supervisors.

A serious problem with new employees is found. Probationary employees are not evaluated during the probation period and have been terminated without notice or given the cause.

New employees are not advised of the job responsibility, employee rights or grievance procedures.

Grand Jury Conclusion; Personnel problems and practices are a major problem at CPS. The unsatisfactory work environment results in a high turn over. Probationary and tenured employees are constantly worried about losing their job. Individual employees and management have a profound lack of knowledge of personnel regulations.

Grand Jury Report: 1998-1999:

The GJ recommends the position of Program Manager be filled as soon as possible.

Lassen County needs the service of a Grant Writer to prevent the loss of opportunity of finding funds for programs.

A recommendation of the GJ, make the salary of CPS comparable to other counties.

Grand Jury Report: 1999-2000:

The GJ, after review of H&HS and CPS Concluded that the directors of both do not appear to have the management skills required to effectively manage these divisions.

A recommendation of the GJ; The Board of Supervisors should either replace the management at H&HS and CPS or contract out for Mental Health Services.

Previous GJ has several times addressed the problem of poor management and lack of effective services with the Lassen Count Mental Health Department. The response from the Board of Supervisors and the LCMH has been to explain away and then avoid taking any effective action to correct previous recommendations. This Grand Jury believes it is long past time for the LCMH to take positive steps to correct these problems, therefore, the Board of Supervisors should see that such action is taken.

Grand Jury Report: 2001-2002

GJ received several complaints about CPS and identified the following problems:

System Wide Problems:

Failure to perform the mandated visits for out-of-county placements by a qualified social worker.

Failure to complete the required, appropriate and available training.

Lack of formal procedure to document training records.

No policy and procedure manual in place for staff to use as a reference.

Management:

1. The Grand Jury was unable to identify evidence of adequate qualified leadership at the supervisory level;
2. Lack of compliance with the state-mandated in-service training.
3. Lack of effective, germane continuing education.
4. Inability to consistently ensure that the caseworkers meet the investigatory and documentary requirements necessary to provide clear, factual reports to the court.
5. Lack of systematic peer review of cases.

Problems were also noted on the case workers performance.

A conclusion of the GJ was that Case Workers do not seem to know exactly what their job entails and due to a lack of knowledge they find themselves "shooting from the hip" as the attempt to keep themselves from being completely overrun by circumstances. Management's lack of guidance, quality control, and feedback to caseworkers creates a situation where social workers make up policies on site. There seems to be confusion on the part of management as to how to run the department, even to the point of claiming ignorance of, and denying responsibility for, the actions of subordinates. Case workers seem to be running the department on their own in a sort of organization anarchy.

Grand Jury Report 2002-2003

The Grand Jury Received complaints of the following nature in regards to operations of Child Protective Service:

1. CPS management has not protected their employees, but has been working against them.

2. CPS management seems to be able to do as they please and does not have to follow the Lassen County Personnel Rules and Regulations, as other departments are required to do.

3. In spite of CPS management the CPS social workers have legitimate concern for the children of Lassen County.

4. Out of county visits are not being done in the proper amount of time as prescribed by state law.

5. Work space for the CPS unit is inadequate for confidentiality of work products.

6. CPS has several workers on stress leave.

7. CPS has received negative reports from Lassen County Grand Juries since 1989 in regard to some issues without resolve.

8. CPS management is using Administrative Leave as punishment.

9. Degreed Social Workers are being discriminated against and ostracize by old CPS staff and management, resulting in a high turn over rate.

10. Hostile working environment exists in CPS

Findings on these complaints were consistent with the complaints, none were found to be without foundation. Recommendations were made to address each complaint received in those listed categories. In addition to that General Recommendations were made to mandate that CPS follow Lassen County Personnel Rules, to transfer the current CPS director to a none supervisor position and address the hostile work environment found at CPS. The GJ also recommended in the body of the report that bigger work space that would provide the separation of social workers work areas be found.

Report of Findings
Lassen County

On-site Review
May 19 and 20, 2004

Child Welfare Agency Review

Public Law 96-272, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 addressed widespread program inconsistency in the nation's child welfare system. Federal funding is based on states' adherence to the federal authority. The specific manner in which the state meets Federal requirements is described in a mandated state plan, one component of which describes monitoring and evaluating the provision of Child Welfare Services (CWS).

Historical Information

In August 1999, the Children's Services Operation Bureau (CSOB) conducted a Division 31 compliance review of the Lassen County Child Welfare Services Agency (CWS). The agency was found to be out of compliance in seven of the ten areas reviewed (CP1, initial case plan completed timely; CP2, parent(s)' signature on case plan; C1, timely in-person investigations; C2, required number of face-to-face visits with child within first 30 days of initial face-to-face contact; HE1, documentation that out-of-home care provider given the child's health and education information; MED 2, required dental examination; and ILP1, Transitional Independent Living Plan incorporated in case plan). The CWS agency submitted a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to the CSOB and submitted Quarterly Progress Reports. The agency achieved compliance in three of the seven areas (C1, HE1 and ILP1) in April 2002.

The CSOB conducted a Division 31 compliance review of the Lassen County Child Welfare Services Agency in July 2002. The agency was found to be out of compliance in five of the seven areas reviewed (C1, timely in-person investigations; C3, face-to-face contact made with the child within the latest regulatory time frame; MED 1, current physical health examination; MED2, annual dental examination, and ILP1, Transitional Independent Living Plan incorporated in case plan). The areas of C1 and ILP1 determined to be out of compliance in July 2002 were brought into compliance through corrective action in April 2002.

The agency submitted a Corrective Action Plan that was approved by CSOB November 19, 2002. The agency did not submit any Quarterly Progress Reports to the CSOB and failed to complete their Corrective Action Plan for the July 2002 review.

In August 2003, in response to a request from Lassen County administration for a program evaluation and the subsequent 2002-2003 Lassen County Grand Jury Report, staff from the California Department of Social Services conducted an on-line and on-site evaluation of the child welfare services program in Lassen County. Findings from that evaluation were consistent with the findings of the Grand Jury regarding the lack of regulatory compliance in the areas of emergency and monthly face-to-face contact with a child. As a result of this evaluation, the Lassen County CWS agency was asked to update their Corrective Action Plan and to submit quarterly progress reports to the

Report of Findings
Lassen County

Data

Number and rate of children with referrals

Unduplicated count of child clients under age 18 in referrals in 2002, per 1,000 children under age 18 in population

Number and rate of children with referrals	617	79.3 per 1,000
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Number and rate of children with substantiated referrals

Unduplicated count of child clients under age 18 in referrals in 2002 that had substantiated allegations, per 1,000 children under age 18 in population

Number and rate of children with substantiated referrals	193	24.8 per 1,000
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1A. Recurrence of maltreatment (Fed)	
First six months of the study year	
10/1/02-3/30/03	13.4%
7/1/02-12/31/02	10.9%

1C. Rate of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care (Fed)	
Nine-month review period	
1/1/03-9/30	0.00%
10/1/02-6/30/03	0.00%

3E. % reunified within 12 months (Fed)	
12-month study period	
10/1/01-9/30/02	90.0%
7/1/01-6/30/02	91.2%

3D. % adopted within 24 months (Fed)	
12-month study period	
10/1/02-9/30/03	75.0%
7/1/02-6/30/03	25.0%

3B. % with 1-2 placements within 12 months (Fed)	
12-month study period	
10/1/02-9/30-03	83.7%
07/1/02-06/30/03	88.4%

3F. % of admissions who are re-entries (Fed)	
12-month study period	
10/1/02-09/30/03	31.3%
07/1/02-06/30/03	27.3%

Report of Findings
Lassen County

However, documentation did not support that a social worker was present.

The County reported that they believed that all of the face-to-face contacts had been completed and that the required documentation might be in the possession of the Emergency Response social worker who was not in the office during the time of our review.

MONTHLY CONTACTS FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION CASES

To achieve compliance, the social worker must have documented a monthly face-to-face contact with a child receiving services (MPP 31-320.4, 31-320.41). Justification for less than monthly visits must be approved and documented in the case record (MPP 31-320.411 inclusive). Additionally, documentation regarding the contact must clearly identify that the child was seen by the social worker and include the date the contact occurred.

If the child is placed in a group home, whether in-state or out-of-state, or a community treatment facility, the social worker shall visit the child at least once each calendar month, with at least a two-week time frame between visits and document the visits in the child's case plan. (MPP 31-320.41) Exceptions for less than monthly visits for children placed in a group home or community treatment facility are not permitted. (MPP 31-320.411(6))

C3. Was face-to-face contact made with the child within the latest required time frame (March 2004)?

Found in zero of the 21 FR cases reviewed

Noncompliance responses were given to this question when there was no documented face-to-contact between the child and the social worker for the month of March 2004 located in the case file.

Reviewers were unable to locate documentation of a face-to-face contact between the social worker and the child in any of the 21 cases for the review month of March 2004, or for the preceding two months (January and February 2004) and none of the 21 cases documented a valid visit exception. In three of these cases the children were placed in a group home.

During the May 2004 on-site review, the County reported that they had missed opportunities to document contacts. They explained that they had not realized they could have been documenting non-scheduled office visits, court appearances, Independent Living meetings and group meetings with mental health where the child and a social worker were both present at contacts that would meet this requirement.

MONTHLY CONTACT FOR PERMANENT PLACEMENT CASES

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Lassen County

respond to ER referrals. It was not clear to the CDSS that this other county employee met the Division 31 requirements identifying who can investigate ER referrals. The agency does not have a process in place to ensure that completed face to face contacts are documented in CWS/CMS or the case file in a reasonable time period. Less experienced social workers shadow the experienced workers conducting the investigations.

In addition to her administrative duties, the Director not only responds to ER referrals, completes investigations and files petitions; she is also responsible for a caseload of on-going cases. This would involve developing case plans, visiting the child, family and out-of-home services providers, providing services, preparing court reports, and appearing at the status review hearings. The agency and the social worker staff would benefit from relieving the Director from any and all direct services responsibilities

The social worker staff, although dedicated and capable, are new and do not have expertise in social work or case management practices. They have inherited open cases from workers who are no longer employed by the agency. To ensure employee retention and competency, the social worker staff would benefit from training, as well as, consistent mentoring and support. Additionally, social worker staff may benefit from having the ER investigations responsibilities delegated to one experienced social worker, giving them the opportunity to concentrate their energies to their existing cases and the activities associated with those cases. This may allow the social worker the time to ensure that Division 31 and court requirements are completed within the mandated time frames. The county reported that they are considering dedicating one experienced social worker to complete the ER investigations to ensure that investigations are completed timely and that documentation regarding the investigations is documented in the CWS/CMS or in the case record.

Out of county Provider Telephone Interviews

Eight foster care providers that are located outside of Lassen County were identified for telephone interviews. Attempts to contact the eight care providers by telephone resulted in four interviews, three voicemail messages and one missing telephone number. The findings are as follows:

Question	Response
1. Frequency of face to face contact between the Lassen County social worker and the child.	Only one of the four providers interviewed reported that face to face contacts had occurred.
2. Where do face to face contacts occur?	The one provider reported that the contact was completed at the FFA.
3. Quality of fact to face contact on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being thorough.	The one provider reported the quality of the face to face contact as ranging between a "1 and 2".
4. Frequency and quality of face to face contacts between the Lassen County	The one provider reported the frequency as once a month with the quality ranging

Report of Findings
Lassen County

between the Lassen County social worker and the child occur?	occurred at the CWS agency; one provider reported that the contact was at the FFA, one reported that the social worker saw the child at school and one provider reported that the child was seen at the home.
3. Quality of fact to face contact on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being thorough.	Only one provider reported the quality of the face to face contact as a 1. The other 11 providers reported they had not met the Lassen County social worker.
4. Frequency and quality of face to face contacts between the Lassen County social worker and the provider.	Eleven of the providers had no contact with a Lassen County social worker. One provider had contact twice during May 2004
5. Frequency of telephone contacts between the Lassen County social worker and the provider and the quality of that contact.	Ten of the providers reported no telephone contacts. One provider reported one telephone contact in the past six months and one provider reported that they had frequent telephone contact.
6. Frequency of written contacts between the Lassen County social worker and the quality of the written contact.	Two providers report they received written documents; one stated received lots of written documents; one stated nothing after Notice to Appear; one stated nothing since 2/28/03; one stated nothing from Lassen CWS, only reports from group home; and six providers report no written contact.
7. Has the Lassen County social worker kept the providers informed of the needs, services of the child and the expectations of the case plan and the provider?	Two of the providers reported they had been kept informed, and ten providers reported that they were not kept informed.
8. Did the providers have any concerns with service provision or availability?	Three of the providers reported that they had no concerns, and nine providers reported they had concerns with service provision.
9. What could the providers identify as areas of strength of the social worker and agency?	One provider identified the Bridges program and Mental Health program; one provider identified CASA workers and the CASA program; one provider identified that the foster care payment was timely; and one care provider identified that the agency tries hard to respond to program's requests; one provider identified the agency would help you if in crisis; one

Report of Findings Lassen County

resource for their less experienced co-workers. This important aspect of CPS can only come with time and staff stability. In the interim, this group must depend upon a strong and present direct-line supervisor.

Supervision

Supervision is a vital component of CPS and plays, at the very least, two primary roles. The first role of the direct-line supervisor is to manage the workload in accordance with statutes, regulations, and county policy. A supervisor has to judge the workload and allocate resources to manage it. He or she has to monitor the work to ensure that processes are performed pursuant to the rules, and to make sure that the children and families are treated with dignity.

While managing the workload is one of the primary roles of the CPS supervisor, the other primary role played by the direct-line supervisor complements it: mentoring and supporting staff. CPS staff are caught in constant cross-fire of demands and conflicting priorities. An experienced CPS supervisor models calmness and prioritization, helping to reduce the chaos and overwhelming feelings that can engulf CPS staff. Perhaps the most important thing the CPS supervisor can provide is a steady presence, an availability to provide experience and support.

Currently, Ms. Henson, the Director, is acting as both an administrator and supervisor. Unfortunately, while her intentions are in the right place, she cannot adequately fill both roles. In her administrative role, she is still dealing with the ramifications of the adverse actions taken against former employees; reviewing case records and statistics in order to bring the county into compliance with State regulations; attempting to forge policies and procedures; and interacting with other county officials and stakeholders.

All of these necessary administrative duties pull Ms. Henson away from the direct supervision that her new staff so desperately require. This situation puts a greater burden on the new employees, who need a full-time supervisor.

Distractions and Other Stressors

Other distractions and stressors that this reviewer noted during the May 19 – May 21 review include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The CPS office has recently relocated, bringing with it the disruption and additional work that is inherent in such an event. Furthermore, during the move, current staff discovered past referrals that had been either misplaced or ignored.
- An article critical of the current director had recently appeared in the local paper, generating anxiety among staff of impending administrative instability, as well as doubts concerning the progress CPS was making toward State compliance.

Cover Page

California's Child and Family Services Review County Self-Assessment

County:	Lassen County
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	Lassen County Children and Family Protective Services
Period of Assessment:	May 25, 2004 through June 30, 2004
Period of Outcomes Data:	January 2004 and April 2004 CDSS Data Reports
Date Submitted:	June 30, 2004
County Contact Person for County Self-Assessment	
Name:	Mike Noda or Carolyn Williams MPA
Title:	Co Executive Directors, Community Service Solutions
Address:	87 Kokanee Drive, Oroville, CA
Phone:	530-589-1845
Email:	Mnoda49@comcast.net
Submitted by:	
Behavioral and Public Health Director	
Name:	Kevin Mannel
Signature:	

County & Community Partners	In Collaboration with: Name(s)	Signature
County Probation Department	Debbie Rives MSW	
County Health Department	Kevin Mannel	
County Mental Health Department	Kevin Mannel	
Foster Child Representative		
Local Education Agency	Mike Justice	
As Applicable:		
CDSS Adoption Agency	Roberta Wilson-Jolly	
Susanville Rancheria		

Please provide name and affiliation of other participants on separate page

The race characteristics of Lassen show Lassen County to be overwhelmingly white 80%, Latino 13%, and small African American and Native American populations leading a variety of other ethnic populations under 1%.

Households by type show some interesting characteristics. Demographic data shows family households (families) are 70.4% (6,777) of the household types in Lassen County with nonfamily households being 29.6% (2,848). Only 10% (990) of the family households show the female as the householder with no male present, and the predominant nonfamily householder (24.5%) are 2,354 individuals living alone. Additionally, 71% of female households have children under 18 years old.

Household Occupancy	Number	Percent
Total Households	9,625	100
Family Households (families)	6,777	70.4
<i>With own children under 18</i>	<i>3,452</i>	<i>35.9</i>
Married couple family	5,366	55.8
<i>With own children under 18</i>	<i>2,453</i>	<i>25.5</i>
Female householder (no husband)	990	10.3
<i>With own children under 18</i>	<i>705</i>	<i>7.3</i>
Nonfamily householders	2,848	29.6
Householder living alone	2,354	24.5
Householder 65 years or older	886	9.2

- The demographics of Lassen County indicate a strongly white male middle aged population between 25 to 54 years old.
- After 54 years old the population declines dramatically.
- Lassen shows a strong family household tendency for families with children.

Some of these demographics are attributed to the four federal and state prisons located in Lassen County and the people necessary to manage these facilities. If there was a significant transient population attracted to the county because of their loved ones imprisonment it would be anticipated that the female householder population would be greater than 10.3%.

The Children's Demographics, prenatal mortality, prenatal care, and health insurance statistics are as follows:

Children Total Population 0-17	6,610 Households	7,389 Children
Infant Mortality (0-12 months)	Low Number Event	Per 1,000
Mothers receiving Early Prenatal Care	All	81.5%
	White	84.4%
Low Birthweight	All	5.3%
	White	5.4%

8 th Grade Reading Scores (scoring @or above 50 th NPR on STAR test)	2000	2001	2002
All Students	52%	63%	61%
Disadvantaged students	39%	52%	42%
Other students	69%	69%	71%

B. CWS Outcomes and C-CPSR Data Indicators.

1. Child Welfare Services Participation Rates Update, Jan. 04.

(Data will be updated as soon as current information is obtained).

Number of children < 18 in population

Population projections for 2002, from Claritas, Inc.

January 2004 projection	7,780
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Number and rate of children with referrals

Unduplicated count of child clients < age 18 in referrals in 2002, per 1,000 children

January 2004 projection	617	79.3 per 1,000
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Number and rate of children with substantiated referrals

Unduplicated count of child clients < age 18 in referrals in 2002 that had substantiated allegations, per 1,000 children < age 18 in population

January 2004 projection	193	24.8 per 1,000
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Number and rate of first entries

Unduplicated count of children < age 18 entering a child welfare supervised placement episode of at least five days duration for the first time in 2002, per 1,000 children < age 18 in population.

January 2004 projection	56	7.2 per 1,000
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Number and rate of children in care

Number of children < age 19 in child welfare supervised foster care on July 1, 2003, per 1,000 children < age 19 in population.

January 2004	71	9.0 per 1,000
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OUTCOME ANALYSIS

Context of analysis: At the time this assessment was started, June 1, 2004, the Lassen County Children's Protective Services program was going through a series of administrative, staffing, and program crisis. Please reference Self Assessment Section II Public Agency Characteristics, B. and C. CPS County governance structure and Number/composition of employees, for the background and description of program problems that were occurring for the proper context of

12-month study period	
10/1/01-9/30/02	15.4%
7/1/01-6/30/02	12.3%

1A and 1B –Recurrence of Maltreatment Analysis:

The Federal measure and State measures for Lassen County for this outcome show Lassen to be above the National Standard of 6.1% and above the State Average of 10.9%. These rates are high and reflect the administration and staffing problems that Lassen County has been struggling with through the past 12 months. The trend over the data periods indicate an increase in reported maltreatment and is consistent with the problems that continued to plague the Lassen County CPS program. In fact these numbers may actually be low in that it has been recently discovered that:

- *There were approximately 110 referrals that had not been investigated during the period of March 2004 through May 2004;*
- *Emergency response social worker initiated in-person investigations were within the required time frame in only 2 of 54 cases reviewed in May 2004.*
- *During the period March 2004 through May 2004 there was no clear protocol for emergency response. A social worker who was on loan from Lassen Works was utilized for emergency response in-person investigations on an intermittent basis.*

The Lassen County CPS program is currently in a 30 corrective action plan required by the State Operations Bureau because of the May 2004 review. The 30 day plan was required to immediately address the child safety concerns that were identified in the review process. In the next 30 days every child in placement will be visited and reassessed to ensure their safety. There are additional elements to the plan to address intake issues that have been initiated already. The corrective action plan is an attachment also.

In the past 12 months Lassen County CPS staff have had a 100% turn over and are currently staffed at 50% (only four of the eight social worker positions are filled). The highest seniority social worker is 9 months, the others are 4 months, 3 months, and 1 month. There is only one social worker IV (masters level), the other three are social worker I's (bachelor's level). There has been no first line supervisor for 12 months and no program manager for 24 months. There are no established written policies and procedures. See additional comments in Section II.

Outcome Indicator 1C -- Rate of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care

This measure reflects the percent of children in foster care who are abused or neglected while in foster care placement (currently limited due to data constraints to children in foster or FFA homes). This data was developed by UCB. It is a federal outcome measure.

Percent of child abuse and neglect referrals in the study quarter that have resulted in an in-person investigation stratified by immediate response and ten-day referrals, for both planned and actual visits.

2B. Percent of child abuse/neglect referrals with a timely response	Immediate Response Compliance	10 Day Response Compliance
Q3 2003	57.1%	41.8%
Q2 2003	83.8%	25.0%

Process Measure 2B-Percent of Child Abuse/Neglect Referrals with a Timely Response Analysis:

With the number of referrals that were not being investigated and the number of phone calls (possible referrals) that were not being returned Outcome Measure 2A and Process Measure 2B data are underreported. As previously indicated Lassen County had stacked referrals in the office where they had a low chance of getting responded to in a timely manner, and sometimes not at all. With the current CPS Director on medical leave 110 not investigated referrals have been discovered. Additionally, the phone system (that is now being replaced) did not have a roll-over function to send calls to social workers if the incoming line was busy. If the line was busy a message was taken and the social worker was expected to return the call. With 110 allegations not investigated it is reasonable to assume there were a significant number of phone calls that were also not returned. Additional data from the recent May 2004 CDSS Children's Services Operations Bureau reflect the failure of emergency response to referrals:

	January 2004	February 2004	March 2004
Number of referrals	63	55	155
Number of investigations	22	17	49
Number of substantiated referrals	12	9	32

Even without the above circumstances immediate and 10 day response times are below safe response timelines. There are no policy and procedures and no standardized assessment approach, both are now being developed. Again, the staffing issues and lack of supervision are critical factors in this outcome. See additional comments in Section II.

Process Measure 2C -- Timely Social Worker Visits With Child

This is a process measure designed to determine if social workers are seeing the children on a monthly basis when that is required. Children for whom a determination is made that monthly visits are not necessary (e.g. valid visit exception) are not included in this measure. This data was developed by CDSS. It is a state process measure. This report is based on CWS/CMS only.

7/1/02-6/30/03	91.2%
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State: For all children who entered foster care for the first time (and stayed at least five days) during the 12-month study period, what percent were reunified within 12 months?

3A. % reunified within 12 months (entry cohort)	
12-month study period	
10/1/01-9/30/02	80.9%
7/1/01-6/30/02	78.4%

3A and 3E--Length of Time to Exit Foster Care Analysis:

The CPS social workers are very aware of the need to reunify families whenever possible. They consciously develop their case plans to realistically and reasonably allow families to comply and experience success in addressing their family issues. Unfortunately the staff lack the training, assessment tools, available resources, experience, and workload to effectively develop case plans and engage families to truly resolve families issues. This is evidenced in the Rate of Foster Care Re-Entry measurement in outcome 3F and 3G. Another concern of the "Time to Exit Foster Care" measurements is the fact that court continuances are common practice in the family reunification program. This practice is a factor of the high caseloads that the staff is carrying and the subsequent difficulties the staff has in court case management compliance. The concern is that the 20% that are not reunified prior to the 12 months are products of time lines that are artificially stretched due to poor court case management. Additionally, true concurrent planning is not being done at the initiation of family reunification. Reference the comments made in Section II regarding the identified administrative and staffing issues.

Outcome Indicators 3A and 3D -- Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Adoption

This is an outcome measure reflecting the percent of children adopted within 24 months of removal of a child from the home. The data was developed by UCB. It is a federal and state outcome measure.

Federal: Of all children who were adopted from child welfare supervised foster care during the 12-month study period, what percent had been in care for less than 24 months?

3D. % adopted within 24 months (Fed)	
12-month study period	
10/1/02-9/30/03	75.0%
7/1/02-6/30/03	25.0%

State: For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care for the first time (and stayed at least five days) during the 12-month study period, what percent were adopted within 24 months?

3A. % adopted within 24 months (entry cohort)	
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placement assistance is provided and foster parent support is provided. These measurements identify the strengths of the FFA system, which is very successful at placing and maintaining placements.

Outcome Indicators 3F and 3G -- Rate of Foster Care Re-Entry

This measure reflects the number of children who re-enter foster care subsequent to reunification or guardianship. The data was developed by UCB. It is a federal and state outcome measure.

Federal: For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care during the 12-month study period, what percent were subsequent entries within 12 months of a prior exit?

3F. % of admissions who are re-entries during the 12-month study period	
10/1/02-09/30/03	31.3%
07/1/02-06/30/03	27.3%

State: For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care for the first time (and stayed at least five days) during the 12 month study period and were reunified within 12 months of entry, what percent re-entered foster care within 12 months of reunification?

3G. % who re-entered within 12 months of reunification (entry cohort reunified within 12 months)	
12-month study period	
10/1/00-9/30/01	17.6%
7/1/00-6/30/01	21.9%

3F and 3G-Rate of Foster Care Re-Entry Analysis:

The Federal (27.3%) and State (21.9%) re-entry percentages for Lassen are very high. The National standard for re-entry is 8.6% or less and the California Federal average is 10.7%. Again this analysis is the same as the "Time to Exit Foster Care" measurements. The CPS social workers are very aware of the need to reunify families whenever possible. They consciously develop their case plans to realistically and reasonably allow families to comply and experience success in addressing their family issues. Unfortunately the staff lack the training, tools, experience, service resources and workload to effectively develop case plans and engage families to truly resolve the families issues. This is evidenced in the Rate of Foster Care Re-Entry measurement in outcome 3F and 3G. Another concern of the "Time to Exit Foster Care" measurements is the fact that court continuances are common practice in the family reunification program. This practice is a factor of the high caseloads that the staff is carrying and the subsequent difficulties the staff has in court case management compliance. The concern is that the 20% that are not reunified prior to the 12 months are products of time lines that are artificially stretched due to poor court case management.

were in kin, foster, FFA, group, and other placements (first placement type, predominant placement type); What percent of children in child welfare supervised foster care were in kin, foster, FFA, group, and other placements at the point in time?

	Initial Placement	Primary Placement	Point in Time Placement
	10/1/02-9/30/03	10/1/02-9/30/03	Oct 1, 2003
4B. Relative	14.1%	26.8%	33.3%
4B. Foster Home	5.6%	7.0%	3.3%
4B. FFA	77.5%	62.0%	47.8%
4B. Group/Shelter	2.7%	1.4%	6.7%
4B. Other	0.0%	2.7%	8.9%

	Initial Placement	Primary Placement	Point in Time Placement
	7/1/02-6/30/03	7/1/02-6/30/03	Jul 1, 2003
4B. Relative	16.4%	34.5%	28.2%
4B. Foster Home	3.6%	5.5%	5.6%
4B. FFA	80.0%	58.2%	53.5%
4B. Group/Shelter	0.0%	1.7%	8.5%
4B. Other	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%

Outcome Indicator 4B-Foster Care Placement in Least Restrictive Settings Analysis:

This measure reflects Lassen County's dependence on the Foster Family Agency system for placements. It also reflects the CPS department's lack of staff able to address licensing, recruitment, and placement issues. Additionally, the interviews with the social workers indicated the difficulty there is in the process for relative placements. The social workers have workload issues and thus have difficulty managing the relative placement requirements.

Outcome Indicator 4E -- Rate of ICWA Placement Preferences

This measure reflects the percent of Indian Child Welfare Act eligible children placed in foster care settings defined by the ICWA. This data was developed by CDSS. It is a state outcome measure.

Of those children identified as American Indian, what percent were placed with relatives, non-relative Indian and non-relative non-Indian families?

Q3 2003	
4E. Relative Home	0.0%
4E. Non-Relative Indian Family	100.0%
4E. Non-Relative Non-Indian Family	0.0%

Outcome Indicator 8A-Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood
Analysis:

There is a sizeable number of children receiving transitional services, however, the children are not completing high school, completing vocational services, or even obtaining employment. This measurement reflects only 50% of the children in ILP transition to an identified outcome in the program. The traditional means of providing ILP services need to be reviewed and rethought through the redesign process. It is very difficult for 16 to 20 year olds to navigate the transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency even in the best of circumstances. In many ways the system continues to fail the needs of the children in its care when this adulthood transition is not effectively addressed. These measurements must improve to address breaking the cycle of abuse in children.

Human Services Agency but was reorganized as a stand alone department in a restructuring six months ago. This restructure was done to develop more autonomy for the department while also streamlining the administration. The current department consists of 14 staff positions. There are 8 social workers, 2 office assistants, 1 analyst, 1 administrative secretary, 1 social worker supervisor, 1 temporary deputy director position, and the department director. (see the attached organizational chart)

1. Staffing characteristics/issues. (Turnover ratio, private contractors, worker caseload size by service program).

The critical issue of the Lassen CPS department is staffing; both in the lack of staff and the inexperience of the staff. The department has had a recent history of high turnover, high vacancy rate, and lack of experienced social workers. In the last year there has been a 100% turn over in social worker staff. Currently there are 4 social workers out of 8 positions for a 50% vacancy rate. Three of the social workers are social worker I's and one social worker has a master's degree in social work and is a social worker IV. The highest seniority social worker in the department has nine months as of June 2004. The next highest seniority is four months, then three months and one month. As of the beginning of June 2004 there were 206 open cases that the 4 social workers were responsible for managing. The social workers carried integrated caseloads so were responsible for the full spectrum of program services, from intake to permanent plan. Some social workers carried over 60 cases, extremely high in consideration of the 1999 AB 2030 workload study which set recommended caseload standards. With the high caseload level some of the social workers have to complete an average of one court report per day on top of their other required case management activities. The social workers are also responsible for the after hours emergency hotline response. With only 4 social workers they must rotate through the weekly coverage schedule once a month or every four weeks.

In a small department the staffing issues are magnified due to the reverse economy of scale factor. It is critical to have enough staff to do the key activities of the programs and without that there is an almost inability to operate the basic system functions. For example, there must be enough staff to cover the daily intake process and emergency response capability. There also has to be enough staff to manage each of the CPS program components, family maintenance, family reunification, and permanent plan. Staff must also be available for the weekly after hours hot line emergency response coverage. And there also must be enough staff to effectively manage the court case workload.

With only 4 social workers in the department, basic program coverage borders on the unmanageable. Priorities are developed jeopardizing the basic program integrity. Social workers may find themselves in the place of choosing whether to respond to an ER, complete and file a court report, or making a mandatory home visit all on top of the case management crisis that occur daily. This puts key

- The county should centralize the ER referral activities with an experienced social worker.
- The county should develop process and procedures to ensure that all ER referral investigations are completed within the required time frames and to ensure that investigations are documented in CWS/CMS within a reasonable period of time.
- The county should develop process and procedures to ensure that all face to face contacts are completed monthly. Additionally, they should ensure that all contacts with the child and family are documented in CWS/CMS.
- The county should provide the social worker staff with sufficient training, resources and supports to ensure that they develop the expertise needed to effectively work with families and manage their cases.
- Within the next 30 days, the county should provide the CSOB with a Corrective Action Plan for Timely Response to Investigations and monthly face to face contacts with the child.

The county corrective action plan was in the process of being developed at the time of this assessment writing.

Lassen CPS Administration Issues.

At the time this assessment was started, June 1, 2004, the department simultaneously underwent an administration crisis. The Lassen County Children and Families Protective Services Director went out suddenly on extended medical leave. At the time of the Director's departure the department also had no program manager or first line supervisor; the Director had been fulfilling both those vacant roles while also carrying a caseload of approximately 30 cases. The Director's departure left the department with no management or first line supervision, a staffing level at 50% with all inexperienced social workers.

The County Administrative Officer had to step in on an emergency basis and temporarily reorganize the department. An interim administrator was appointed, Kevin Mannel Director of Behavioral and Public Health, and a Deputy Director from Mr. Mannel's department was assigned onsite to provide program management direction. Mr. Mannel was assigned temporary oversight of the department in an agency structure which included the departments he is currently director over and CPS. He in turn assigned a Deputy Director and began a reorganization to address the staffing, training, and workload issues in CPS. Within 24 hours of the change Mr. Mannel brought in staff support from Public Health, Behavioral Health, Drug and Alcohol, and Lassen Works. Caseloads were evaluated to identify cases that could be shifted to the additional staff who had previous CPS experience and a new intake process was reengineered utilizing CPS staff and both the Behavioral Health Systems of Care staff and the Alcohol and Drug staff in a multidisciplinary approach. A Lassen Works social worker who had formerly worked in the CPS program was loaned to assist in handling some of the emergency response intake cases. This change

Health background he foresees pursuing collaborative projects in as many avenues as possible in the CPS program.

4. Political jurisdictions.

a. Number and type of political jurisdictions.

- Lassen County has ten school districts and one SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area) under the County Office of Education.
- There are two law enforcement agencies in Lassen County, the Susanville Police Department and the Lassen County Sheriff's Office.
- There is one Native American Rancheria in Lassen County.
- Susanville is the only incorporated city in Lassen County.
- There are three unincorporated communities in Lassen County, Westwood, Herlong, and Beiber.

5. Technology level.

Lassen County CPS currently only utilizes the Child Welfare Services Case Management System. They are operational on all of the system components and are under full utilization. They currently use no other technology innovations or additional systems. Their staff analyst is a highly experienced CWS/CMS systems manager who is also utilized by the U.C. Davis Child Welfare Services regional training institute. She is the one consistent factor in the department for the past seven years and has kept the system fully functional for the department and staff trained in the systems use. All four social workers are trained and growing in their competency in the CWS/CMS system.

D. Current Systemic Reform Efforts.

Systemic Reform Effort	
CWS Redesign Early Implementing County	No
Family to Family (with Annie E. Casey or Stuart Foundation)	No
Family to Family (without Annie E. Casey or Stuart Foundation)	No
Integrated Services/AB 1741	No
Structured Decision Making	No
Wraparound Services	No
Other	No

least a minimal degree. Staff training and policy development are critical issues in this area.

4. General Case Planning and Review.

This also is an area of case management that suffers from the lack of training, lack of written policies and procedures, adequate supervision, and the inexperience of the staff. Again, as with family participation, there are no set policies, case planning and review are left up to the individual social worker's discretion. The department lacks consistency across all of their social workers in terms of case planning protocols and strategies. Again, supervision was being done by the department's Director although she carried a caseload herself along with her administrative responsibilities. There had not been a supervisor on staff for the past 12 months, nor had there been a program manager on staff for the past 24 months. Due to the workers' caseload size and workload case planning and reviews were done on a daily priority basis. Subsequently supervisory review only occurred during incidents where the social worker clearly needed direction to resolve an issue or crisis in the family.

Staff is also hampered by the limited resources that are available in the community to provide a well developed treatment plan. They have a great deal of difficulty in managing the high number of out of county placements and arranging adequate and appropriate services for them. Often times it is difficult to arrange services due to the difficulty in provider billing for out of county Medical reimbursement. Usually, due to workload issues, the social worker is developing the case plan around the identifiable services available for the family rather than a clear strategy for treatment. Staff training and policy development are critical issues in this area.

C. Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention.

1. General licensing, recruitment and retention.

Two Foster Family Agencies are used exclusively in Lassen County, Environmental Alternatives and Mountain Circle. These two FFAs manage all recruitment, retention and licensing issues. There is no Lassen County staff available to license, recruit, manage, or coordinate a county foster home system. All foster placement arrangements are made by the individual social workers with the two foster family agencies, Environmental Alternatives and Mountain Circle.

All relative placements in compliance with the kinship placement regulations are handled by the individual social worker responsible for the case. They must address both the home licensing requirements and the personal screening requirements. The social worker typically addresses the personal background check procedures first then if the relative passes that screening they address the home safety issues. Again, this process has no written policies and procedures to provide the social worker guidance in these placements. Additionally, workload and staffing are issues with relative placements.

cases that were reassigned to them lacked signed case plans or the families stated they had never read or saw the plan. It is an unwritten policy for social workers to now obtain signed case plans. This ensures that the families have been involved to at least a minimal degree. Staff training and policy development are critical issues in this area.

The case planning process is also an area of case management that suffers from the lack of training, lack of written policies and procedures, adequate supervision, and the inexperience of the staff. Again, as with family participation, there are no set policies, case planning and review are left up to the individual social worker's discretion. The department lacks consistency across all of their social workers in terms of case planning protocols and strategies. Again, supervision was being done by the departments Director although she carried a caseload herself along with her administrative responsibilities. There had not been a supervisor on staff for the past 12 months, nor had there been a program manager on staff for the past 24 months. Due to the workers' caseload size and workload case planning and reviews were done on a daily priority basis. Subsequently supervisory review only occurred during incidents where the social worker clearly needed direction to resolve an issue or crisis in the family.

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3. Services to Indian children.

Staff are aware of the Indian Child Welfare Act regulations but have not been fully trained in this area. Again, there are no policies or procedures to provide direction to the social workers so they are left to address these issues as they come up. There are currently only 3 children of Native American descent that are in foster placement in Lassen County. There are 4 tribes with members in Lassen County, the Paiutes, the Maidu, the xxx, and the xxx. There is an active MOU with the Susanville Rancheria and an identified liaison with Lassen County CPS.

4. Staff / Provider Training.

There is no staff provider training capability with the Lassen County Children's Protective services agency. In terms of CPS staff training the department uses the UC Davis Regional Child Welfare Services CORE training program and any other relevant training they come across in their community.

IV. COUNTY-WIDE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES.

A. County-wide Primary Prevention Efforts.

1. COMPAC (centralized community collaboration efforts)
2. Prop 10 Commission (Diversified Management) (zero to five prevention early intervention focus).
3. Family Resource Centers.
4. Probation Prevention.
5. Systems of Care.
6. Lack of a formal Child Abuse Prevention Council.
7. Failure of CPS Administration to be an active aggressive partner in community prevention strategies.

Review of Lassen County CWS by Gary Kupfer

Background

I was invited to Lassen County to review their CWS processes and to make recommendations for change where appropriate.

Methodology

I met with Kevin Mannel, the Director of the Lassen County Behavioral and Public Health Agency, with Jessica Herman, Interim Deputy Director of Children and Family Services and with various CWS staff to become acquainted with CWS practice in Lassen County and to get their view of the issues and possible solutions. I reviewed Dr. Thomas D. Gauthier's "Response to the Lassen County Grand Jury Final Report 2002-2003 Findings Regarding Lassen County Child Protective Services, Health & Human Services" dated August 30, 2003. Also reviewed was a CDSS Report of Findings from an on-site review of Lassen County CWS on May 19 and 20, 2004. On the Deputy Director's office shelves was found a binder with a CDSS Report on Lassen County Child Welfare Services from an onsite review that was held from January 22 to February 9, 1996. I participated in a conference call between Lassen County CWS Administration and CDSS staff who did the onsite review in May 2004. During that conference call, CDSS staff was very concerned about the lack of contact with minors for safety reasons and wanted to hear from Lassen County how they planned to resolve this issue.

History of problems

Lassen County CWS has a multitude of problems. Interestingly, the 1996 onsite review identified many of the same problems that currently exist such as: the lack of a Policy and Procedures Manual to guide social work staff; no use of a Risk Assessment process in evaluating risk; no implementation of State regulations; a lack of training of staff pertaining to State regulations and a risk assessment process; personnel problems at both the supervisor and social worker level; a severe morale problem; a severe shortage of social workers which leads to management and support staff feeling overwhelmed and unable to keep pace with ER referrals and ongoing case management; the wage level for social workers make it very difficult to recruit qualified candidates; a lack of experience and, the county CWS agency lacks a clear goal.

While the exact concerns of the 2002-2003 are not clearly identified in Dr. Gauthier's response, he does state on page 2, "Nevertheless, the concerns of the Grand Jury about Child Protective Services are valid prima facie, and of immediate concern to this respondent and all involved in the delivery of these services." On page 3, Dr. Gauthier notes new changes implemented by him and his team, i.e.: "refocusing the CPS activities reporting around the provisions in Assembly Bill 636,...."; "Tracking and measurements focus on child safety, permanency of their situation, and family & child well-being."; "CPS is currently under a thorough investigation being conducted by Dr. Gauthier and his personal staff."; "All electronic and 'hard copy' records are under close review to establish patterns of behaviors, and the accuracy and veracity of outputs."

The CDSS Report of Findings from the May 2004 onsite review notes on page 1 that Lassen County CWS submitted a Corrective Action Plan which was approved by CSOB in November 2002. The same paragraph on page 1 states, "The agency did not submit any Quarterly Progress Reports to the CSOB and failed to complete their Corrective Action Plan for the July 2002 (sic) review." According to this CDSS report, in August 2003 CDSS staff conducted an on-line and on-site evaluation of the CWS program in Lassen County. The report adds, "Findings from that evaluation were consistent with the findings of the Grand Jury regarding the lack of regulatory compliance in the areas of emergency and monthly face-to-face contact with a child." Lassen County CWS was asked to update their CAP and to submit quarterly reports.

In November 2003, CDSS staff attempted to monitor Lassen County CWS progress toward meeting the CAP, but was unable to determine progress toward compliance as information necessary to support compliance was not documented into CWS/CMS. Lassen County continued to not submit Quarterly Progress Reports to show progress toward achieving compliance.

I did a brief review of several current referrals and current cases. In general, concerns were similar to those already stated, i.e., lack of timeliness of response, a lack of assessment/analysis, a lack of documentation and a lack of contact with minors.

Business Object Reports

Gerrie Dekker, the CWS/CMS Administrator, shared with me that she previously used to run Business Object reports, but in the past was told not to by someone in the "chain of command." Ms. Dekker's skill and expertise in running Business Object reports from CWS/CMS information is going to be critical to Lassen County CWS knowing if they are making progress towards complying with regulations. Running Business Object reports is a powerful tool that can identify training needs for individual staff as well as who is

performing above expectations. These reports can also help supervisors and managers identify system problems, such as where the workload is and to adjust or increase staffing patterns accordingly, if needed.

Ms. Dekker was able to run several Business Object reports for me. One report is the number of current referrals that have been open more than 30 days based on reporting received as of 6/10/04. The total # of current referrals open for more than 30 days is 52: 10 immediates; 1 five day; 32 ten day; and, 9 evaluate out. One 10 day referral has been open since it was received on 12/11/03. I found it to be common that a referral would be reassigned a number of times. I was told by CWS staff that this was due to the frequent turnover of staff.

Another Business Object report run for me was the contacts with children between 5/1/04 thru 5/31/04. The parameters of this report narrowed the universe of minors in the report. For example, each minor (99 listed out of a reported 200 minors in out-of-home care) had a last face-to-face contact documented at some point in time... some last f/f contacts occurred in 2003. The audit, though, of those minors having documented face-to-face contacts during the month of May 2004 is still worth considering. Out of the 99 minors listed, 40 had documented face-to-face contacts in CWS/CMS. This is approximately a 20% compliance rate for the total # of children (200) in out-of-home care. My view is that this shows some progress in the right direction and provides a baseline for future Business Object reports on monthly f/f contacts with minors.

A Business Object report was run for no or missing case plans. Out of 200 minors, 140 minors had no or missing case plans.

Another Business Object report run was of upcoming court reports. This report will be run on an on-going basis and should assist CWS staff to plan and prioritize their daily activities toward completing and submitting court reports timely.

Policies and Procedures/Regulations

I asked three current CWS staff if they knew of any Lassen County CWS Policy and Procedures. Two staff said they knew of none. One staff person said they were given a guide to "Required Forms & Documents to Open a Foster Care Case" at her employee orientation.

In binders in the CWS Deputy Directors office, I found out-of-date personnel policies (1985), an out-of-date MOU with the employee association (1993-1995) and a binder containing All County Letters, but the last ACL in the binder is dated January 27, 1997. Five binders contained Division 31 regulations, but none were current.

Besides the development of policies and procedures, updated and current personnel policies, MOUs, ACLs, ACINs and Division 31 need to be available to the CWS Deputy Director.

I have provided Lassen County CWS with copies of applicable Policies and Procedures from Tulare County; a current copy of Division 31 and the State Handbook; I have gone on the web and identified websites and put under "favorites" in the Deputy Director's CWS/CMS computer where All County Letters/ACINs can be found, where the most current version of Division 31 can be found, where the Welfare & Institutions Code sections, Penal Code and Health and Safety Code sections can be found.

Administration

I choose not to belabor the short-comings of prior CWS Directors, but to look forward. First, and foremost, I commend Kevin Mannel, Acting Director of Lassen County Children and Family Services, for inviting me to come and assess the functioning of Lassen County CWS. Mr. Mannel and I had conversations about what is currently not working in the agency, but we had many more discussions about opportunities and ideas the current situation presents in moving the agency in a positive direction. I found Mr. Mannel to be open to hearing what is not working in the agency and open to considering recommendations I presented verbally to him.

Unlike prior administrators, I believe Mr. Mannel has the managerial skill to implement accountability systems to monitor CWS activity and to implement meaningful and positive change to achieve real results toward complying with CDSS regulations. Mr. Mannel has an interest in knowing what it will take to turn things around for his agency.

Jessica Herman is the Interim Deputy Director for CWS. Ms. Herman has prior CWS experience and has been a therapist with Lassen County Mental Health. This is an excellent background to have as a CWS administrator, but more than that it is the personal and professional qualities Ms. Herman brings to the job that makes her valuable to the success of turning the agency around. From my observations, I found Ms. Herman to be knowledgeable about human behavior, she is empathetic, she is a good listener, yet is able to give direction when needed. She also gives her staff support. She has a desire to see that CWS clients receive the best and appropriate service from her staff.

This is a difficult time for CWS staff and morale is low. There is a backlog of referrals and the lack of contact with minors issue. Every day, crises and the on-going demands of the job make their job seem overwhelming and undoable. This was the consensus of each of the CWS staff I spoke with. At this point, they lack trust and confidence in the

CWS Administration that the demands of their job are understood and appreciated. There is a reluctance to approach CWS Administration about how they feel because of fear, fear of a negative and/or perhaps disciplinary response. Staff indicated this fear comes from how previous CWS Administrators interacted with them. Many staff are taking a "wait-and-see" and "show me" attitude about whether positive changes will actually occur.

I have to give credit to the willingness of CWS staff to still try and do the best they can under these difficult circumstances. They truly care about clients and want to do the right thing, but at the moment do not have much hope things will turn around based on their past experiences.

Training

It is clear that training staff on the use of CWS/CMS is a necessity and needs to be a high-priority. Most CWS staff have been on the job less than a year and need this training to know how to properly enter documentation and complete necessary fields and reports in CWS/CMS. Ms. Dekker has previously provided such training and mentoring to CWS staff. I encourage CWS Administration to formalize Ms. Dekker's role in training and mentoring CWS staff. Ms. Dekker should assess, on an annual basis, the CWS/CMS skill level of staff by asking them to show her how to do different functions in CWS/CMS. This provides quality control that staff, in fact, know how to properly use CWS/CMS rather than there being an assumption that they do.

The training of CWS staff, which are fairly new, needs to be a priority. They need to know what is expected of them and provided with the skills and knowledge to perform their job competently.

Personnel and Caseloads

I believe that present staffing levels are too low to adequately service and case manage the workload. There currently are eight social work case managers, which works out to approximately 25 minors per worker. On top of these case counts is the coverage needed to take referrals on the Child Abuse hotline, to enter them into the CWS/CMS system, to respond to the referrals in a timely manner and, if a detention is warranted, to intensively investigate facts and then have the time to write the facts into a detention report and then a juris/dispo report. Given these demands upon existing staff, I am not surprised that contacts are not being made and that documentation is not being inputted into CWS/CMS.

The current plan is for two of the eight social workers being designated to respond to referrals. This would leave the other six workers with 33 minors each on a caseload, which is somewhat high, but workable if they do not need to worry about being drawn into doing Emergency Response activities. I am concerned about having only two workers simultaneously having to cover the Child Abuse hotline, entering referrals from phone calls and Suspected Child Abuse Reports (SCARS) into CWS/CMS, going out in the field to investigate reports timely, placing minors should there be a need to detain, entering placement information, entering narrative information, writing Detention and Juris/Dispo reports and attending court hearings. In my professional opinion, having that staffing level for Emergency Response services will cause Lassen County CWS to remain "behind the curve" and be unable to comply with a Corrective Action Plan and State regulations.

It is my strong suggestion that two additional positions be allocated for the purpose of doing Screening functions. These Screeners would answer calls on the Child Abuse hotline, review SCARS and enter the information into CWS/CMS. Screeners would also have time to do an adequate initial risk assessment on referrals. They would have the time to call collaterals such as schools and law enforcement for further information. That information combined with a search and review of prior CWS referrals and intervention can make the difference in designating a referral as an immediate response, a 10 day response or an evaluate out. If there is a slowdown in the number of referrals received, a Screener could act as a "float" to assist in making monthly contacts, in going out on referrals should the Emergency Response workers become backlogged or overwhelmed. Another task a Screener could be assigned to do is to be the ICPC Coordinator for the agency.

Counties in California will soon be implementing the CWS Redesign. Components of the CWS Redesign will lead to increased monitoring for outcomes and compliance with regulations. By design, there will be more of a focus on the front end of CWS, that is, in the Emergency Response program. More emphasis will be placed on trying to keep families together by CWS staff collaborating with services in the community and inviting fuller participation on the part of parents and family members to assist in the problem-solving process. Caretakers, relatives as well as foster parents, are to be part of this process.

This will demand even more time of the Emergency Response worker as they attempt to engage parents, family and collaborate with potential service providers. How implementing the CWS Redesign will require reasonable caseloads is aptly stated on page 13 of the document, "State of California Program Improvement Plan for the Child Welfare Services Program." It states, "Significant evidence exists to suggest that manageable caseloads are an important element in improving caseworker practice and in creating a beneficial service environment for the children and families served by child

welfare. Studies show that reasonable caseloads are associated with better outcomes. Lower caseloads and a focus on child and family engagement, ensures workers are more available for relationship building."

Because the focus of the CWS Redesign is on seeking family cooperation with services, there is a need to plan for an increase in caseloads in Voluntary Family Maintenance cases. Voluntary Family Maintenance cases require intensive monitoring of the situation in the home for the safety of the minors and of continually assessing what additional support might be needed to achieve successful outcomes. I am therefore also recommending that two additional social work positions be added to focus specifically on Voluntary Family Maintenance cases. Adding Voluntary Family Maintenance cases to the existing caseloads of workers carrying on-going cases will likely lead to frustration and poor outcomes because of the increased caseload count. Over time, as reunification cases and permanency planning cases decline because fewer children are detained, social worker positions carrying on-going cases can be reassigned to handle Voluntary Family Maintenance cases.

To recap, in order to have a good chance of complying with State Regulations and "get ahead of the curve" with the soon to be introduced CWS Redesign, I am recommending the following CWS staffing pattern in Lassen County:

- 1 Deputy Director
- 2 SS Supervisor II positions
- 12 Social Worker positions
- 1 Licensing worker/Foster Parent Recruiter/Trainer and Relative Assessor
- 1 CWS RN
- 1 CWS Licensed Social Worker

There needs to be a separation of the Deputy Director from line staff by having supervisors handling case consultations, review and approvals of reports. The structural weakness of the current CWS operation and even of having only one supervisor is that the Deputy Director is drawn too much into day-to-day decisions. The Deputy Director needs space and time to truly administrate CWS. The importance of this is heightened by the fact that the Deputy Director, by default, must also be the CWS Analyst (it was not clear if CWS actually has an Analyst). It is the Deputy Director who must have the "big picture" or vision of CWS and be able to stay current on changes in laws and regulations and then plan on how to integrate these changes into practice by the CWS line workers.

A consistent complaint I heard from CWS staff is the low pay they receive compared to similar positions in other counties. I am not familiar with the pay schedule for the different CWS positions in Lassen County and cannot verify whether or not this is true. However, it would be prudent to do a comparative salary study of counties who are similar to Lassen County. It is easy to "save a buck", but with continual turnover, Lassen County is paying for on-going recruitment and training for new staff who then choose to leave. Stability amongst staff and supervisors is necessary for any progress to be made in achieving compliance with State regulations.

Lassen County CWS is under much pressure at this time to accomplish three goals in a short time frame, i.e., making monthly contacts with minors, working off the backlog of referrals and the third is to review Lassen County compliance with regulations on assessing relatives/NREFMs. This is to occur on top of the struggle to meet the needs of existing cases and of any new referrals that may come in. I do not believe that achieving the three goals while maintaining adequate service to existing cases and new referrals is possible with existing staff. It is my recommendation that, if possible, extra help staff be hired to do the contact visits with minors and assist with the referral backlog in order to become current. For me, there is a question as to whether or not Lassen County CWS could continue to stay current without additional staff.

I am recommending that Lassen County CWS consider adding an RN position and Licensed Social Worker position to CWS. Many, if not all, of the minors removed from parents have medical issues. An RN could monitor minors who have serious health conditions, liaison with other medical professionals to advocate for the minor's access to medical services, respond to and train caretaker questions/concerns about the medical care of minors. Additionally, an RN could accompany workers on referrals when a minor's medical condition is an issue. An RN could also provide in-home training and mentoring to a parent or caretaker that is necessary to care for the minor's medical needs. It is my belief that 100% of an RN's time could be charged to the CWS Health-Related Pin Code when they timestudy.

The Licensed Social Worker would provide in-depth psycho-social reports for CWS workers with recommendations concerning parents and minors. Getting quick and accurate assessments done on minors and parents as to their mental health needs/intervention speeds up the time appropriate services can be considered and started. This would likely improve "reasonable services" findings by the court as to services. It is also consistent with the CWS Redesign in front-loading services to clients. I can double-check what the clinicians in CWS in Tulare County charge their time to, but I am under the impression that they also charge their time to the CWS Health-Related Pin Code when the timestudy.

Another position I would recommend creating is for a Licensing worker/AB 2129 – Foster Parent Recruiter/Trainer and Relative/NREFM Assessor. The justification for this position is discussed further under the “Fiscal” section.

Fiscal Issues

Approximately half of Lassen County's minors in out-of-home are placed with relatives. Most of the other minors in out-of-home care are placed with Foster Family Agencies. Minors are placed with Foster Family Agencies because there are no county licensed homes available for placement. An added problem is that a number of the homes of Foster Family Agencies are out-of-county.

This situation has serious fiscal implications for Lassen County. A simple comparison of the cost between licensed foster care and an FFA placement illustrates the fiscal problem. A child 0-4 years of age placed in a relative's home or in a county licensed home will have a foster care rate of around \$400. If the child is a federally eligible minor, the county share of cost is 30% of the \$400; if the minor is not federally eligible, the county share of cost is 60% of the \$400. Comparatively, a child 0-4 years of age placed with a Foster Family Agency will have a treatment rate of around \$1,500. The same county percentage of the cost of care applies when a minor is placed in an FFA; if the minor is federally eligible (30% of \$1,500) or is not federally eligible (60% of \$1,500). Fiscally, the cost to Lassen County of placing minors in FFAs needs to be researched, if it has not been done so already.

From discussions with CWS workers, relative assessments and assessments of non-related extended family members are possibly not being done to the standard required in Article 3 of the Licensing regulations. I have provided Tulare County's protocol regarding the assessment of relatives and NREFMs. The first issue regarding these assessments is that CDSS has made it clear via ACLs and verbal contacts with counties that these assessments must adhere to regulations. CDSS contacted counties in November 2002 asking if counties were following regulations not only on prospective relative/NREFM placements, but on current relative placements. Additionally, reassessments of relatives/NREFMs are due annually. I can say with some certainty that if the assessment regulations are not followed, there is no IV-E funding available for those relative/NREFM placements and I believe CDSS has indicated that there would be no State funding available as well if regulations are not adhered to.

According to Ms. Dekker, Lassen County has already been audited for compliance in assessing relatives/ NREFM and failed the audit. Lassen County is currently under a CAP to come into compliance. Lassen County has fiscal exposure to losing more money if the relative/NREFM assessments are not being done correctly or annually.

Complying with the assessment regulations for relatives/NREFMs is likely to have a placement and fiscal impact on the county. In Tulare County, over a years time of implementing the assessment regulations for relatives/NREFM, placement with relatives in Tulare County dropped 50%. Where did those minors then get placed? FFAs were the only placement option with enough bed capacity to handle the percentage of minors not being placed with relatives. Net county cost to Tulare County for this shift in placement setting rose 1 million dollars more than had been planned for. A similar impact could occur to Lassen County and such a trend needs to be monitored for.

As many FFA homes are out-of-county, it costs the county additional money in travel cost and staff time to visit minors or transport minors for visits with parents. It is my belief that Lassen County could significantly reduce the expenditure of county dollars on foster care costs by approaching the State's Community Care Licensing (CCL) agency about funding for a staff person to do licensing functions in Lassen County, i.e., to recruit, train, license and monitor licensed homes. Increasing local placement options would result in less travel time and cost for staff, but the major beneficiaries of doing this would be having minors placed in closer proximity to their parents, in closer proximity to local services such as therapists who could continue to see the minors/parents once reunification takes place, thus increasing continuity of care and likely having better outcomes.

The other benefit of having "an expert" in-house who is familiar with Article 3 and who also would do relative/NREFM assessments means there would likely be compliance with the CAP and regulatory requirements. Ms. Dekker has told me that, in the recent past, the concept of Lassen County licensing homes was discussed with CCL. She and other Lassen County CWS were told that CCL was willing to send a Licensing worker to Lassen County to train someone on Licensing regulations and initiate the recruitment and licensing of foster homes in Lassen County.

Additional funding for this position can come from AB 2129 funds, which is for the enhanced recruitment/training of foster parents. A third funding stream to fund this position could come from the Relative Assessment allocation. Assessing relatives for placement is not an easy task to do as it requires detailed knowledge of Article 3 of the licensing Evaluator's Manual. I do not believe that each placement social worker can adequately comply with regulations in assessing relatives. CCL may question whether or not a licensing person can also assess a relative for placement.

In Tulare County, a Lead Worker oversees both Licensing staff and Relative Assessment staff. The rationale is that the assessment for prospective foster parents and prospective relative caretakers is essentially the same. However, the actual decision to place is up to the case carrying worker. Tulare County has successfully argued this point with CCL Administration (Colleen Anderson) and other small counties are doing the same (I have heard that Merced County and Kings County combine these functions).

Mr. Mannel has informed me that he is bringing in a consultant to look at fiscal issues. In addition to the fiscal issues noted above, it would be my recommendation that all the pin codes CWS staff could possibly timestudy to be itemized and reviewed. I have discussed SCIAP funds with Mr. Mannel and Ms. Herman. SCIAP funds are approved annually in the State Budget and Lassen County should look in this coming year's budget to see if SCIAP funding still exists and what their allocation would be. At present, only minors placed by Lassen County CWS with relatives would be eligible for SCIAP funding as minors placed in treatment placements, i.e., FFAs and Group Homes are ineligible.

Analysis

Clearly, it is time for Lassen County CWS to take responsibility for the lack of compliance issues and develop a strategic plan on how they will come into compliance. Major change will not occur overnight or within a few weeks, but little steps can be taken now to demonstrate progress and achieve positive results. Making contacts with minors and working off the referral backlog is doable, but additional staff are needed, perhaps on a temporary basis, to accomplish these goals. I would recommend that successes be celebrated not just with CWS staff, but also shared with the County CAO and Board of Supervisors.

There needs to be good and frequent communication between line staff and CWS Administration. When possible, asking staff for input about their ideas on how to implement a new law or regulation would help them take ownership of the solution. Staff may have ideas on how to improve delivery of services and suggestions should be encouraged.

In truth, I am encouraged about the future of Lassen County's CWS program. If there is follow through on a plan to improve compliance and service delivery, Lassen County CWS has the potential in a year's time to be a model program for other CWS programs in California to consider.

Conclusion

Though the problems plaguing Lassen County CWS have been around for years, I believe there is hope for the future and that a turnaround is possible. What yet remains is the creation of a vision; a point of reference that whatever is developed or implemented is centered on.

My vision for Lassen County CWS comes down to two words...customer service. The customers are the families of Lassen County. But in order to provide good customer service, it requires knowing what the expectations are (Policies and Procedures/Regulations), providing timely service (responding within given timeframes), having the capacity to act timely (adequate staffing) and follow up to ensure that the service was appropriate (monitoring).

Recommendation

Below are additional recommendations I believe are important to an improved CWS in Lassen County.

- That Core training provided by the Northern Social Worker Academy (UC Davis) be a priority.
- Discuss with the Northern Social Worker Academy (UC Davis) the possibility of having a trainer on-site in Lassen County to mentor CWS employees when they investigate referrals, assess for risk and do on-going case management to ensure follow-up and reinforcement of the training CWS staff receive.
- That scheduled meetings between workers and their supervisors and between supervisors and the Deputy Director occur on a weekly basis. There needs to be a structure as to what is discussed during these meetings. For example, the status of referrals and upcoming court reports needs to be reviewed weekly to ensure adherence to timelines. On-going cases in Family Reunification, Family Maintenance and Permanency Planning status need to be staffed at least monthly between workers and their supervisors. Client progress/lack of progress needs to be discussed. Barriers that clients are having in accessing services requires problem-solving by the worker and the supervisor.
- With the coming implementation of the CWS Redesign, it is recommended that staff receive training as to what changes will occur in CWS practice. Also, CWS Administration needs to articulate and discuss with CWS staff the philosophy behind the changes of the CWS Redesign.

- Expectations need to be clearly stated and understood by staff as this is what must be monitored. Mr. Mannel has stated that he is pursuing a Quality Investigation component to monitor compliance with regulations.
- That "canned" Business Object Reports be run at least monthly, if not more frequently at this time. It is suggested that a backup person be trained on how to run Business Object reports in the event Ms. Dekker is sick or on vacation. These "canned" reports should be by worker. The worker should be given a copy of the reports pertaining to their caseload as well as their supervisor. The reports would be discussion items during meetings between the worker and their supervisor. Additionally, the supervisor should report compliance indicators to the Deputy Director when they meet.

This report is respectfully submitted by Gary Kupfer on June 18, 2004. If there is a question, please feel free to contact me.